MYSTICAL CONTEMPLATION

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OR

THE PRINCIPLES OF MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

BY THE

REV. FATHER E. LAMBALLE

EUDIST

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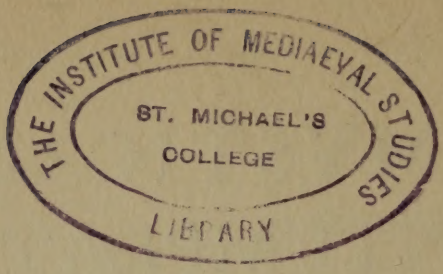

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PREFACE

The few articles on Mystical Contemplation, contributed by the writer to the *Ami du Clergé*, appear to have met with considerable appreciation. Most encouraging praise was received from both the secular and the regular clergy, from editors of important reviews, from professors of theology in seminaries and teaching bodies, from Jesuits, Benedictines, Capuchins, Marists, and others. So much were the articles sought after that, when the last appeared in July, not one was procurable in the following August. And hence, from all quarters came requests for their separate publication, while at the same time translations into other languages were being prepared.

It is a pleasure to supply such a demand; for it shows that more and more attention is being paid to a matter of the highest necessity. How great was the discredit into which the study of such things had unhappily fallen, owing to the excesses of the pseudo-mystics

of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries! It was right to be on one's guard against abuses; but it was not right to neglect such an estimable way of perfection as that of *mystical contemplation*, a way trodden by all who have attained a high degree of sanctity. Many prejudices still remain. The writer knows more than one excellent priest who regards works with titles like the present one as possibly interesting curiosities, but as having no practical use. To get them to read such books, the titles would have to be changed.

But how will such priests direct contemplative souls whom they will certainly meet with? Listen to St. John of the Cross: "For, whenever God begins to anoint a soul with the unction of loving knowledge, most delicate, serene, peaceful, lonely, strange to sense and imagination; whenever He withholds all sweetness from it, and suspends its power of meditation—because He reserves it for this lonely unction, inclined to solitude and quiet — a spiritual director will appear, who, like a rough blacksmith, knows only the use of the hammer, and who, because all his knowledge is limited to the coarser work, will say to it: Come, get rid of this, this is waste of time and idleness: arise and meditate, resume thine

interior acts, for it is necessary that thou shouldest make diligent efforts of thine own; everything else is delusion and folly. Such a director as this does not understand the gradations of prayer, nor the ways of the Spirit, neither does he consider that what he recommends the soul is too late, since it has passed through that state already, having attained to the state of sensitive abnegation; for when the goal is reached, and the journey ended, all further travelling must be away from the goal." . . .[1]

"But it may be said that these directors err, perhaps, with good intentions, because their knowledge is scanty. Be it so; but they are not therefore justified in giving the rash counsels they do, without previously ascertaining the way and spirit of their penitent. And if they do not understand the case, it is not for them to interfere in what they do not comprehend, but rather to send their penitent to others who understand him better than they. It is not a trivial matter or a slight fault to cause, by incompetent direction, the

[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza III, line iii, Vol. II, pp. 273, 274, of Lewis's translation of the *Complete Works of St. John of the Cross*. Ed. 1864. All the references indicated by "L. T." are to this edition.

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loss of inestimable blessings, and to endanger a soul. Thus, he who rashly errs, being under an obligation to give good advice—for so is everyone in the office he assumes—shall not go unpunished for the evil he has done. The affairs of God are to be handled with great caution and watchful circumspection, and especially this, which is so delicate and so high, and where the gain is infinite if the direction given be right, and the loss also infinite if it be wrong."[1]

It was to help spiritual directors in the discharge of their duty that these articles were first published in the *Ami du Clergé*. The writer is too busy to recast and extend their contents, but he believes they will suffice nevertheless.

The simplicity and modesty of the papers need cause no surprise. Still further simplification would have been preferable. When a question is well elucidated, it is always reduced to a few clear principles, with which countless particular ideas are brought into relation ; and when they are thus deduced, they are self-explanatory and shed light upon one another.

[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza III, line iii, L. T. II, p. 280.

It was the writer's hope that this might be the case with this booklet. He hopes that by clearly explaining the matter with which it deals it may help some minds to connect several notions which they have not linked together, and that it will cast some light on several points of spiritual teaching the connexion between which has not always been plainly perceived.

In fine, it is more complete than it appears. What is contemplation? Who is called thereto? How are contemplatives to be dealt with? Through what stages may they be expected to pass? These are the only questions which it is indispensable to clear up. I have sometimes dealt with them concisely, but so many references are given that what is said may be completed by useful reading; and such reading will be easily within reach of those who are familiar with the subject.

"No book is better calculated than yours to make the clergy in general appreciate such questions as these," writes the editor of one of the great reviews. At any rate it may be of service to many priests who have not the time to read several great books on the subject. The work should be specially appropriate to the studies of seminarists. This most profitable

science of mysticism (the writer hopes his readers will have no remaining doubts on the subject) is very unequally cultivated in different seminaries: in some it appears to be entirely unknown, and this is deplorable ; in others, it forms a regular course of teaching, and this is wise. No doubt the programmes of study in our seminaries are very overloaded, but it must not be forgotten that spiritual knowledge is among the most important for a director of souls.

This little book should also be useful in religious communities, especially to mother-superiors and novice-mistresses. In it, there are certainly a few difficult theological notions at the outset, but there is nothing harder in theology than in any other science, and perhaps we are too fearful of theology that throws so much light on many things. Some nuns, at any rate, have read these articles quite undaunted.

The text follows that which appeared in the *Ami du Clergé* as it stood, but a few notes have been added. An exaggerated dread of upsetting anyone led to the exclusion of polemical matter as far as possible ; no opinion was refuted without setting by the side of it as clearly as possible the doctrine taught by

the great masters, St. Thomas and St. Francis of Sales, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa, who were taken as guides. It has been observed that certain adverse opinions might be refuted rather more directly with advantage: and this observation has been taken to heart. But in opposing, in the interest of souls, any doctrine or train of argument, the writer has endeavoured to show as much charity as possible towards individuals. To say the truth, those whom he was opposing were often his own comrades in arms, and such as had contributed, in the midst of a too general forgetfulness, to keep mystical teaching in honour. But they had accepted some of the errors of those who run it down, and they had incorporated elements that were fatal to it, or at least likely to do it harm. To point out such misunderstandings, to supplement a few explanations, or to deduce from them certain practical consequences, such will be the object of the notes added to this book.

May these pages, which were written for the enlightenment of souls and to lead them to love God more, largely contribute to such a result . . . and may they have no other.

INTRODUCTION

I HAVE been asked to write on mystical contemplation, a subject of the utmost importance. Therefore I am about to set forth the results of a long and conscientious study of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, of St. Thomas and St. Francis of Sales in the following chapters. The two first named are recognized by the Church as masters of mystical theology; the two others are both great mystics, and great theologians and doctors of the Church. Moreover, all four are in perfect accord with one another. With them, one cannot go astray ; against them, one is bound to miss the way. I therefore prefer to give an abundant and indisputable exposition of the teaching of these great masters to heaping up the names of secondary writers in scanty quotations. Yet I shall not wholly deny myself the privilege of showing how well all tradition is in accord with the great masters I propose to follow.

This study will comprise four chapters: (1) The Nature of Contemplation; (2) The Call to Contemplation; (3) The General Direction of Contemplatives; (4) The Phases of Contemplation.

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MYSTICAL CONTEMPLATION

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF CONTEMPLATION

Summary.—§ 1. In what sense Contemplation is an extraordinary grace—It is not a grace *gratis data*—It is extraordinary as to its mode: it is produced by the gifts of the Holy Ghost—Passive life, an effect of the gifts of the Holy Ghost—Passive faith and love—Harmony of the mystics and theologians.

§ 2. It is not extraordinary in itself: St. Thomas and theology—It is only faith and love, say the mystics, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, St. Francis of Sales. —Contemplation defined.

The theological notion of contemplation is far from clear. It is a kind of *supernatural* prayer, say some; *mystical* is the epithet used by others; *infused*, say others. It is commonly said to be an *extraordinary grace.* All these expressions, and that of *passive prayer*, which is also often met with, have contributed much towards making people suppose that it is something miraculous, something perhaps indefinable, and certainly very rare.

§ 1.—In what sense contemplation is an extraordinary grace.

Later on, we shall see what to think of its frequency or rarity. But, first of all, we must ascertain *in what sense* it is an *extraordinary* grace, and its place amidst things supernatural.

It is not a grace GRATIS DATA.—God's graces are divided into sanctifying graces and gratuitous graces, *gratum facientes* and *gratis datæ*. The expression *gratum faciens* designates a grace the purpose of which is to make its recipient better, and to forward his salvation. It is given him for that object. Such is the grace which is rightly called sanctifying or habitual, and which renders anyone just and holy in the sight of God, and such is the actual grace that urges and helps us to do the good works by which habitual grace and holiness are increased. These graces are given to all, at least to some extent, according to laws laid down by God. This is why they are often called ordinary or common graces. All receive them so far as is necessary for salvation; but our co-operation, our dispositions, and the use we make of them, obtain them for us in greater abundance. And for this reason they

are not entirely gratuitous, although they are so, at least so far as they enable us to merit them. Graces *gratis datæ*, on the contrary, as their name indicates, have just this characteristic, that they are absolutely gratuitous, apart from all merit. We shall receive the former, but our endeavours towards sanctification will be to no purpose for the reception of such as these: to work miracles, to speak a language we have never learnt, to receive such a mission as that of Joan of Arc. We can only merit salvation and the means of attaining it; but the favours just mentioned are beyond the range of our personal sanctification; they correspond with particular providential designs, and their use is to do good to others. They are of an extraordinary and miraculous nature. Such are visions and revelations: neither Balaam nor his ass gained anything from their vision. Nevertheless these graces are very often accompanied by other graces of a sanctifying character; or else, by reacting on their recipients, they may themselves help towards their sanctification. In 1 Cor. xii. St. Paul enumerates a list of graces *gratis datæ*, and opposes charity to them, as being far preferable.

Are the graces of contemplation extra-

ordinary in the sense of graces *gratis datæ*, or are they graces of personal sanctification? Many, who are deceived by words, rather carelessly conclude that they are graces *gratis datæ*.[1] But this is a mistake, and the error is all the more serious in that it is a fundamental one. Nothing can be plainer than St. Thomas and St. John of the Cross; till the end of the seventeenth century there is no difference of opinion; and among modern writers, even those who put down contemplation as a miraculous grace, teach doctrines as to its nature which allow of a contrary conclusion being inferred from them.

Thus everyone, along with St. Thomas, is agreed in teaching that contemplation is a result of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. No one has anything to bring against this doctrine; only two or three writers think that a few special phenomena, which sometimes occur in the highest stages of contemplation, are due to another principle. But who would venture to maintain that the gifts of the Holy Ghost given in Baptism, and increased in Confirmation, are not graces of personal sactification, but graces *gratis datæ?* St. Thomas

[1] A rather prevalent idea, found in many valuable modern works.

declares the contrary in many passages, notably in the *Summa*.[1]

The very order of the questions in the *Summa* of St. Thomas reveals his idea of contemplation. In treating of graces *gratis datæ*, he includes among them certain extraordinary ecstasies in which God is seen, as happened, according to him,[2] in the case of St. Paul; but he separates from them contemplation, in which, he says, God cannot be seen, because it cannot take place apart from *species*.[3]

St. John of the Cross makes an express distinction between graces *gratis datæ* which do not directly unite one to God, which are dangerous and never to be desired but rather rejected, and the graces of contemplation or union, graces of faith and love the highest state of which is a kind of *luminous love*, whereby the soul may be almost constantly united with God, and which are the greatest graces the soul can receive on earth. Read this distinction in *The Ascent of Mount*

[1] 1^a $2^{æ}$, q. 68, art. 3, ad 1 et ad 2; and 2^a $2^{æ}$, q. 45, art. 5.

[2] *Ibid.*, 2^a $2^{æ}$, q. 171, prœmium; q. 175, art. 3-5; q. 180, art. 5.

[3] 2^a $2^{æ}$, q. 180, art. 5. *Species* = something specifically conceivable, used to denote a class of spiritual acts (see p. 27 in this book).

Carmel.[1] But the best way to see how fundamental a position this doctrine occupies in the teachings of St. John of the Cross is to go through the whole of the second and third books of *The Ascent:* throughout a great many chapters the writer does nothing but put souls on their guard against extraordinary graces to carry them on to higher contemplation by faith, hope, and love.

Contemplation is extraordinary as to its mode: it is produced by the gifts of the Holy Ghost.—If the grace of contemplation be not a grace *gratis data*, how can it be understood as an extraordinary grace among graces *gratum facientes?*

Theology teaches us that there are several kinds of actual graces *gratum facientes*. The common doctrine is that one cannot do the least of supernatural works, even an act of politeness, without receiving an actual grace. But these graces sometimes entirely escape our notice; in our determinations we are fully conscious of what we are aiming at, of the motives we obey, and are hesitating or energetic according to the strength or weakness of the attraction we follow. The extent of the action of the Holy Ghost entirely

[1] Book III, ch. xxix.

escapes our consciousness; apparently God does little more than when He simply assists the exercise of our faculties in their natural order. Moreover, some theologians refuse to see a real grace in the supernatural assistance given to the exercise of infused virtues. In any case, these graces are always at our disposal. Whenever we wish to act for some supernatural motive, whenever, according to a very probable opinion, we do any right act in a state of grace, the Holy Ghost assists us.

But there is another kind of actual grace which is not thus at our disposal, but which takes place in an extraordinary manner, when God wills. By it we are momentarily given up to divine action; we obey an extrinsic principle, which is God: *Est in homine*, says St. Thomas, *duplex principium movens: unum quidem interius quod est ratio; aliud autem exterius quod est Deus.*[1] In virtue of this external principle, we receive an increase of strength for the mind and will which makes difficult efforts easier. We may easily infer from the sudden appearance, without any traceable cause, of new dispositions, from some great difference between our present powers and their immediately preceding state,

[1] *Summa*, 1ª 2æ, q. 68, a. 1.

that we are helped from on high. Hence come great resolutions, conversions, outbursts of fervour, and steps forward. We have all of us often, in some way or other, been taken by surprise by some sudden enlightenment, by some generous aspiration, when we appeared to be rather passive than active. Such graces as these are necessary, according to St. Thomas, even for the just, if they are to continue persevering, and therefore all the more so, if they are to attain to any eminent sanctity.

St. Teresa well notes this twofold aspect of grace: "I should need expert knowledge for many reasons," says she; "thus, here I would use it to explain the nature of any *general* or *special* help in favour of many who are ignorant of it; I should tell them how the Lord means the soul in this kind of prayer *to see in a manner with its own eyes such special help*."[1] There, indeed, we have both common general grace and special grace.

The same distinction is to be found in the following passage of St. John of the Cross: "The active way is that by which the soul is able to make, and does make, efforts of its own to enter in, *assisted by divine grace*. . . . The *passive* way is that in which the soul doeth

[1] *Life*, ch. xiv.

nothing as of itself, neither does it make any efforts of its own; but it is God who works in it, *giving special aids*, and the soul is, as it were, patient, freely consenting thereto." [1]

These extraordinary motions of the Holy Ghost are, in fact, the kind of graces to which contemplation belongs; the graces of contemplation are the highest in this order of graces, but to this order they belong. Indeed, one easily recognizes in these external motions all the characteristics of divine impulses that set the gifts of the Holy Ghost to work. But, among the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, the gifts of understanding and of wisdom (perhaps the gift of knowledge as well) have acts of contemplation as their proper end.[2]

Passive life, an effect of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.—We must devote a more careful study to the mechanism (if I may venture to use such an expression) of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, since, as all admit, it is these that produce contemplation. Having clearly ascertained the cause, we shall be quite ready to perceive the effect.

Most of the Scotists and Suarez do not think

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book I, ch. xiii. (L. T. I, p. 47).

[2] St. Thomas, *Summa*, 1ª 2æ, q. 68, a. 6 ad 2 et ad 3; a. 7; q. 69, a. 3, ad 1.

that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are permanent habits, but passing presents, transitory gifts of the Holy Ghost, that is to say, just the special actual graces of which I have spoken.[1]

St. Thomas, and most theologians with him, think that such gifts are rather lasting habits which enable the soul to receive God's impulses more readily. In any case, these static gifts only come into play under the actual motion of the Holy Ghost. They are, to use classical terminology, sails that await the wind of grace, or a kind of handle for the Holy Ghost to take hold of. *Vocantur dona quia secundum ea homo disponitur ut efficiatur prompte mobilis ab inspiratione divina.*[2] This inspiration is a motion coming from without, in this case from God, who sets us in action without ourselves : *Inspiratio significat quamdam motionem ab exteriori.*[3]

It is very important thoroughly to understand the special character of the gifts of the Holy Ghost which form a part of our supernatural organization ; they are not sufficiently well known, and therefore the highest degrees of the spiritual life are ill understood : they are the ordinary principle of the lives of the saints.

[1] See Mazzella, *De Virtutibus Infusis*, pp. 130-140.
[2] St. Thomas, *Summa*, 1ª 2æ, q. 68, a. 1. [3] *Ibid.*

St. Thomas admirably brings out the essential difference there is between our manner of action under gifts and our ordinary mode of action by means of virtues. The characteristic of gifts is to produce in us a kind of passive state. By means of a virtue *we guide ourselves*, by a gift *we are led: In donis Spiritus Sancti mens humana non se habet ut movens sed magis ut mota.*[1] The motion comes from without, *motio ab exteriori.* In the exercise of the virtues, we reason in a more or less explicit manner, we consider the motives of reason or of faith that appeal to us, and we make our own determinations. With the gift, there is no need of such slow determination, we follow an impulse, a divine instinct: *His qui moventur per instinctum divinum non expedit consiliari per rationem humanam, sed sequuntur interiorem instinctum quia moventur a meliori principio.*[2] Cardinal Mazzella puts the same thought excellently well: *Cum homo opera virtutum exercet, seipsum movet per propriam deliberationem et consilium. At cum per dona Spiritus Sancti operatur, potius* AGITUR, *inspiratus a Deo, quam ipse se moveat et excitet ad operandum, etsi in illis etiam se moveat quatenus libere sequitur*

[1] *Summa*, 2ª 2æ, q. 52, a. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1ª 2æ, q. 68, a. 1.

peculiarem seu extraordinariam Spiritus Sancti inspirationem.[1]

This, indeed, is an extraordinary state: another works in us from without; our faculties no longer act, as formerly, by our own action or impulse; they are passive; we are, once more to use the words of St. Thomas, the *instruments* or *organs* of the Holy Ghost.[2] It is, as he says elsewhere, no longer "a human mode," but a "mode which is ultra-human": *Dona a virtutibus distinguuntur in hoc quod virtutes perficiunt ad actus humano modo, sed dona ultra humanum modum.*[3] Fundamentally, the act remains supernatural in a virtue as in a gift, but the mode of action remains normal: *Modus operandi qui est in virtutibus est secundum conditionem humanam, quamvis substantia habitus sit ex divino munero.*[4]

The other differences between gifts and virtues are largely corollaries of this essential difference.

The first is, that actions done under the influence of gifts are apart from the rules of ordinary prudence: that is to say in this sense, that ordinary prudence does not intervene in

[1] *De Virtutibus Infusis*, pp. 130-140.
[2] *Summa*, 1ª 2æ, q. 68, a. 3, ad 3; a. 4, ad 1.
[3] III *Sent.*, dist. xxxiv, q. 1, a. 1.
[4] *Ibid.*, ad 2.

their production: *Non expedit consiliari per rationem;* often also in this sense, that it cannot explain them, because the wisdom of the Holy Ghost is above all ordinary rules. God is not under the same obligations of prudence as are binding upon us owing to the infirmity of our powers.

The second difference is, that gifts give rise to acts which virtues are incapable of producing, *i.e.*, extraordinary and heroic acts. But, as has been observed by the theologians, Billot, Mazzella, Terrien, Froget, and others, following St. Thomas and Suarez, if virtues cannot produce the same acts as gifts, gifts nevertheless can bring forth the acts of the virtues. This is why no act can proceed except from the Holy Ghost as its special motive force. Their end, as St. Thomas repeats four or five times in his Question 68, includes all the acts of morality. And let there be no mistake: if the virtues cannot bring forth certain acts of the gifts, it is not because such acts possess any other nature, it is because they are too great to be within the range of the virtues; there is no difference in kind between them, says St. Thomas, but there is a difference in intensity and perfection.[1]

[1] *Summa*, 1ª 2æ, q. 68, a. 2, ad 1.

There are souls which, by abandoning themselves entirely to God, come to the point of feeling as if they were almost altogether passive under His action; they have hardly anything to do except to acquiesce in good impulses. St. John of the Cross[1] says on this subject: "Though it is true that we shall scarcely meet with anyone, who in all things and at all times is under the direct influence of God, whose union with Him is so continuous that his faculties are ever divinely directed; still there are souls, which for the most part in their operations are under the guidance of God, and these are not souls which move themselves; this is the sense of St. Paul when he said that the sons of God—those who are transformed, and united in Him—'are led by the Spirit of God,' to accomplish divine actions in their faculties." St. Francis of Sales[2] well described this state when he called it "a working ecstasy." Then "we not only live a civil, honest, and a Christian life, but a superhuman, spiritual, devout, and ecstatic life, that is to say, a life altogether beyond and above our natural state."

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book III, ch. i. (L. T. p. 212).

[2] *On the Love of God*, Book VII, ch. vi.

It is clearly most important not to forget the second part of the spiritual life, which is above all passive. Acts of contemplation are a part of this life. Also, it is easy to understand that the most usual terms ordinarily used to designate contemplative states in reality express the same fundamental notion, *e.g.* "passive state, motion from without,—extraordinary or superhuman state,—infused knowledge of God,—experimental consciousness or knowledge of the supernatural,—mysticism."[1] All these words chiefly prove

[1] The last word, indeed, is "in itself very vague," and "it has changed its meaning several times."

It has given rise to much confusion. It can only be understood through its history. Formerly, *theology* was used to designate the knowledge, or rather a kind of experimental sense, of God through piety and love. "Let us be diligent in the spiritual life," said St. Ephraim, "so that, by adding good works to good works, we may become perfect. Then only shall we be fit for theology." (*De Virtute,* cap. x.) *Theology* was also called *contemplation.* "Generally our spirit is impatient of vocal prayer, which confines and ties it down, but it willingly is inclined to *theology,* because the *contemplation* of things divine dilates and sets it at ease." (St. Diadochus, *De Perfectione Spirit.*, ch. lxviii.) Then, to distinguish such experimental from speculative theology, the word *mystical* was soon added. Denys the Mystic writes his *Mystical Theology*, in which we find the opening passage of a text commented on throughout the middle ages: "But do thou, O Timothy, exercise thyself unceasingly in *mystical contemplation.* . . ." (*Theol. Myst.*, i. 3). The word was long used in this sense, and thus it was understood by St. Teresa and St. John of

that certain inward acts indicate a higher external cause, namely, God. How salient does their essential characteristic then become! It is what a contemporary writer rather illogically calls "the first secondary characteristic," for he says "that he deduces their definition from it." The latter is the happier phrase.

Passive faith and love. — Now we have ascertained how the gifts of the Holy Ghost act, we have only to apply our doctrine to contemplative gifts, and we shall then form a fairly clear notion of contemplation.

If the gift of understanding, for instance, come into play, it will produce superhuman and passive faith. *Circa ea quæ fidei proponuntur credenda, duo requiruntur ex parte nostra. Primo quidem ut intellectu penetrentur vel capiantur, et hoc pertinet ad donum intellectus.*[1] Comprehension and adhesion through God's extraordinary action will then take place.

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the Cross. Bossuet was one of the first to apply it exclusively to absolutely passive states in which there was no possibility of using one's reason. Since his time, and especially in our own days, the word has become one of uncertain meaning. But to know the meaning of mysticism, more than a mere analysis of the term is required.

[1] *Summa*, $2^a\ 2^{æ}$, q. 8, a. 6.

When one believes through some virtue, *modo humano*, one has in one's mind motives of credibility ; we say to ourselves that it is a lawful, good, and obligatory thing to believe, and we freely accord our belief with more or less of intensity. The Holy Ghost co-operates, but He is concealed under our activity, and unperceived. In the inspired act, the work of the virtue disappears ; we neither weigh nor deliberate, but find ourselves believing, we know not how. There is no room for hesitation ; there can only be adhesion and certitude, because it is the Holy Ghost who causes the act and He is not the cause of any of its defects. We may form some idea of this state of a soul thus inspired by means of a comparison. Suppose we say to anyone : " So-and-so is at the door," and he has no doubt on the subject. He expects to see the visitor enter ; and, if required, he will speak to him as if there were no door at all. In the same way, in superhuman and passive faith, the soul knows, and knows how much more surely, that it is before God, and in God. . . . And from this what deep impressions, what earnest prayer, may result without the intervention of any other gifts!

And thus it is with love. This enables us to understand the kind of blind propensity towards

God of which mystics so often speak. The motives of love or of understanding have never been brought into play, at least *modo humano*, but the soul loves because the Holy Ghost kindles love in it.

Harmony of the mystics and theologians.—Some will think this nothing wonderful. St. Teresa and other mystics call contemplative prayer *supernatural* in opposition to meditation. Are they really thinking of something simpler?—Once more, everyone agrees in explaining this kind of prayer by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, that is to say, as I have done. Passages have already been cited which are in perfect harmony with the doctrine they were quoted to support. But we may go still further: the mystical writers have not failed to define or describe their ideas. We can ascertain the sense in which they use the words "supernatural prayer." I am about to show this. We shall thus obtain a concrete set of facts running parallel with the theoretical and theological explanation already given. After that, the truth will stand forth in all its clearness.

i. *The teaching of St. John of the Cross.*—An external impulse from God, *motio ab exteriori;* in proportion to the passivity of the

soul, a cessation of the procedure ordinarily followed ; such clearly is what we must expect the mystics to set forth in their own way. Now this is just what they do. I have already quoted a passage of St. John of the Cross, in which he opposes the ordinary graces of the active way to the more special graces of the passive way,—and another in which he shows us certain souls given up in all their actions to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.—And here is another which well shows where our own action ceases, and that of God begins :

"This passage (from meditation to contemplation) takes place when the discursive acts and meditation fail, when sensible sweetness and the first fervours cease, *when the soul cannot make reflections as before*, nor find any sensible comfort, but is fallen into aridity, because the spiritual life is changed, and the spirit is not cognisable by sense. And as all the natural operations of the soul, which are within its control, depend on the senses only, it follows that *God is now working in a special manner in this state, that it is He who infuses and teaches*, that the soul is the recipient on which He bestows spiritual blessings by contemplation, *the knowledge and the love of Himself together ;* that is, He gives it the loving knowledge without the instrumentality of its discursive acts, *because it is no longer able to form them as before:* : : :"[1]

And a little further on :

"But the interior goods which silent contemplation impresses on the soul *without the soul's consciousness of them,*

[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza III, line iii, § 5. L. T. II, p. 268.

are of inestimable value, for they are *the most sweet and delicious unctions of the Holy Ghost*, whereby He secretly fills the soul with the riches of His gifts and graces; for being God, He doeth the work of God as God."[1]

Not far from this passage are to be found the words: "In contemplation, one receives." The same ideas occur everywhere. In the *Obscure Night of the Soul*, Book I, ch. ix, he says that "it is God who operates in contemplation." The same thought is repeated in a comparison between meditation and contemplation to be met with in the same Book a little farther on. Everywhere one comes across the same thing, and it will be seen again in passages I shall have to quote for another purpose. Here, however, is one I proceed to give:

"Souls in this state are not to be forced to meditate, nor to apply themselves to discursive reflections laboriously effected, neither are they to strive after sweetness and fervour, *for if they did so, they would be thereby placing obstacles in the way of the principal agent, who is God Himself*, for He is now secretly and quietly infusing wisdom into the soul, together with the loving knowledge of Himself, independently of these divers acts, without their being multiplied or elicited, though He produces them sometimes specifically in the soul, and that for some space of time. And in that case, the soul too must be lovingly intent upon God without specifically eliciting other acts beyond those *to which He inclines it;* it must be *as it were passive*, making no efforts of its own, purely, simply, and

[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, § 7. L. T .p. 272.

lovingly intent upon God, as a man who opens his eyes with loving attention."[1]

ii. *The teaching of St. Teresa.*—St. John of the Cross was a theologian as well as an eminent mystic. St. Teresa is only a good Sister who is a genius and a great saint; she often says that she knows nothing of philosophy or of mystical theology. Nevertheless she describes the supernatural like the theologians. The supernatural exists whenever God "acts in a special manner," according to what has already been quoted from her writings and those of St. John of the Cross. What God does within us, what we do not do of ourselves, this again is the supernatural, *motio ab exterioi.* Either she affirms that acts take place within her, not of herself, and that she cannot bring them about at will, nor check them at will: it is something supernatural;—or else, like St. John of the Cross, she perceives that the powers of the soul come to a standstill in spite of ourselves, and, since it does not depend upon us to fix them in this fashion, she makes the same inference: it is the work of God;—or else she supposes that a thing is beyond her ordinary strength, and her conclusion is always this: it

[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza III, line iii, § 6. L. T. II, pp. 268, 269.

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is God who has done it. Let us prove this by a few quotations.

In her *Second Relation*, given to Father Rodriguez Alvarez, she writes: "I call that supernatural which we cannot acquire of ourselves, however careful and diligent we may be. With regard to this, all we can do is to put ourselves in a state of readiness, and this readiness is of the greatest importance."

In her *Life*, ch. xxiii: "I understood what was taking place within me was supernatural, because I could not resist it nor experience it at will."

Further on, ch. xxxix: "At such times, the remembrance of my good works is as it were wiped out; the spectacle of my infidelities and wretchedness alone is before me, and my mind, not needing to go searching hither and thither, takes it in at a glance, which appears to me to be supernatural."

In the *Way of Perfection*, at the beginning of chapter xxvii:

"Take care not to think that one gets little profit from well-made vocal prayer. While you are reciting the *Pater* or any other prayer, God can put you in a state of perfect contemplation. And thus our great God shows that He hearkens to the soul that calls upon Him, *suspending its understanding, arresting its thoughts*, withdrawing the words from its lips, so that it cannot utter them without a troublesome effort. It knows that the divine Master is instructing

it without the sound of speech, holding its powers in suspense, because their activity, far from being of any assistance, would only be a hindrance to it. Each one of its powers enjoys its own divine object, but in a way the soul cannot understand. It feels that it is inflamed with love without knowing how it loves. It knows that it enjoys what it loves while knowing not how it enjoys. But it understands that its enjoyment far exceeds the range of natural desire. Its will embraces this good without knowing how it is embraced; and to the little extent of its comprehension, it judges that this good is of such high value that all the works in the world put together could not purchase it, or merit it. In fact, it is a gift of the Lord of heaven and earth, of Him who, in giving, is pleased to give in God, and that, my daughters, is perfect contemplation. You can now tell wherein it differs from mental prayer."

In the *Interior Castle*, The Fourth Mansion, chapter i, she compares the satisfactions one experiences in meditation with "tastes," the name she gives to the supernatural prayer of quiet. She speaks thus of certain natural joys: "As you see," she says, "these satisfactions, which are not at all bad, are natural. Now, as it seems to me, *the joys we find in the things of God* are the same; only the latter are more noble, for *though they arise in us*, they end in God. The tastes, on the contrary, have their origin in God."

In the second chapter comes the wonderful comparison of the two fountains:

"Imagine two fountains filling their two basins with water. . . . I say that these two basins are filled in

different ways: the one receives its water from a distance by means of aqueducts and of our own contrivance; the other is in the same spot as the source of the stream, and it is filled noiselessly. . : . And now, to show the difference between satisfactions and tastes, I shall compare the satisfactions to the water brought by aqueducts. In fact, it is by our thoughts, it is by wearying our understanding with the consideration of creatures that we obtain them. The tastes, on the contrary, are like the water that comes from the source of the stream. God is the source, and when He is pleased to grant us a supernatural favour, He produces the tastes in the inmost depths of our souls amidst an ineffable peace and tranquillity and sweetness."

In the third chapter, we find the charming comparison of the tortoise and the hedgehog, which is used again by St. Francis of Sales. After explaining supernatural recollection, she adds:

"Thus, as I have read, does the hedgehog or the tortoise withdraw within itself. Whoever makes use of this comparison ought to understand it; but it seems to me not quite a proper one, for these creatures withdraw within themselves when they wish, whereas, on the contrary, this kind of recollection is independent of one's will, and one can only enjoy it according to God's good pleasure."

iii. *The teaching of St. Francis of Sales.*— Clearly it would be superfluous to multiply our quotations from St. Teresa. Let us end with this passage from St. Francis of Sales, who thus compares natural and supernatural recollection:

"I am not speaking of that recollection whereby those who wish to pray place themselves in the presence of

God. . . . We make this withdrawal of our spirit ourselves. But the recollection of which I mean to speak is not made by the command of love, but *by love itself;* that is to say, we do not effect it of our own choice, inasmuch as it is not in our power to have it at will, nor does it depend on our endeavour; but God works it within us by His great grace."[1]

And he goes on to borrow the comparison of the hedgehog and the tortoise from St. Teresa, qualifying it in the same way.

God's operation,—passivity of soul, an ultra-human mode, all this is what the mystics mean by the word "supernatural."

§ 2.—Contemplation is not extraordinary in itself.

Though our study seems to be finished, yet it is not so.

From the seventeenth century, and especially from the eighteenth century, a considerable number of writers confused contemplation with graces *gratis datæ*. They did not go beyond this. But more recent writers, drawing the logical conclusion from this first mistake, have taught that in it occur acts which are specifically different from those we are able to achieve by means of ordinary graces; and notably, that in it is such a kind of knowledge of God as

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. vii.

indispensably demands new faculties, in the same way as the perception of ultra-violet rays requires a sixth sense. And this knowledge constitutes, according to them, just the difference between ordinary prayer and the mystical state.[1]

The teaching of St. Thomas and the theologians.—I am about to show that this new notion is untenable by examining, always under the guidance of the same masters, the content of various kinds of mystical prayer.

When the Holy Ghost guides our faculties in the way we have seen, what does He effect in them? mysterious acts, the essence of which is unknown and unknowable? or acts already known under another form, and all of them reducible to faith and love? I shall show that they are acts of faith and love, just as before.

We have already been reminded that, accord-

[1] The Revd. Père Poulain, who specially upholds and is perhaps the inventor of this theory, writes: "We call *mystical* those states of a supernatural character which comprise a knowledge of *such a kind* that our own efforts and endeavours cannot succeed in producing them. In fact, as we have just seen, love cannot set up a *specific* difference between ordinary mental prayer and the mystical state. . . . Therefore, the difference must depend upon the *kind of knowledge* received." (*Grâces d'oraison*, Ed. 7, ch. i, No. 9.) As an inference from this teaching, the above writer lays it down that special spiritual senses are presupposed by contemplation.

ing to St. Thomas, all the acts of our moral life are the end of the gifts[1]; that these acts are to be distinguished from acts of the virtues by their perfection, not by their kind[2]; and that there is therefore no specific difference between the faith produced by the gift of understanding in mystical contemplation and the faith produced by the infused virtue of the same name.

There is another argument, the force of which should be apparent to everyone. It is admitted that in the inferior degrees of contemplation at least, where there is usually no occurrence of any visions or of revelations which are exceptional phenomena of another order, there are no new kinds or species. God is satisfied with arousing the original species, or with making some new combination of them. "No new kinds or species." What exactly is meant by this ? Species, kind (*espèce*), this is a name applied by philosophers and theologians to the acts of the soul ; a new species, a new act ; if there be no new species, then there is no new act. Then there is also no knowledge of a specifically different kind. But this teaching is just the opposite of the modern theory.

The latter theory has another awkward

[1] *Summa,* 1ª 2æ, q. 68 *passim.*
[2] *Ibid.*, 1ª 2æ, q. 68, a. 2 ad 1.

consequence. The knowledge which should unite us to God, by taking the place of faith, ought no doubt to have a corresponding virtue of the same species, since virtues are specified by their acts; this virtue, being a means of union with God, would be a theological virtue, like faith. Should we not then have to admit a fourth theological virtue?

But without insisting on this consequence, grave as it would be, let us proceed to an examination of the mind of the mystical authorities.

The teaching of St. John of the Cross: contemplation is faith and love.—St. John of the Cross teaches that perfect mystical union, to which he desires to direct the soul, consists in the total losing of one's will in God by love, and that to attain to this love there is a way, and one way only which leads on to the very end, and that is the way of faith. Let us just take a few passages from a multitude of similar texts.

First, let us show that faith is the way:

"It appears, then, from what I have written, that the intellect, if rightly disposed for the divine union, must be pure, and empty of all sensible objects, disengaged from all intellectual perceptions, interiorly tranquil and at rest, *reposing on Faith;* for faith is the sole proximate and

proportionate means of the soul's union with God, seeing that there is no other alternative, but that God is either seen or believed in. (In fact, the object of the beatific vision or of faith is the same, the sole difference between them being that God is seen obscurely in the one, and contemplated with no intervening cloud in the other.) For as God is infinite, so faith proposes Him as infinite; and as He is Three in One, so faith proposes Him as Three in One. And thus by this means alone, that is, faith, God manifests Himself to the soul in the divine light, which surpasses all understanding, and therefore *the greater the faith of the soul the more is that soul united to God.*"[1]

A little farther on: "At the end of this mortal life, *when* the work of faith *is over*, and the pitchers are broken, the light and glory of God will *then* shine forth."[2]

Here again the same means is spoken of: "He who will attain to the union of God must not rely upon his own understanding, nor lean upon his own imagination, sense, or feeling, *but must believe in the perfection of the divine essence.*"[3]

Elsewhere he similarly observes: "The narrow gate is the night of sense. The soul detaches itself from sense that it may enter into that night, *directing itself by faith*, which

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. ix. L. T. I, p. 85, except the part in brackets, which is from the French only.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 86, 87.

[3] *Ibid.*, Book II, ch. iv. L. T., I, p. 62.

is a stranger to all sense, that it may afterwards travel along the strait road of the other night of the spirit, by which it advances towards God *in most pure faith, which is the means of the divine union.*"[1]

The same idea is set forth very often in this form, *i.e.*, that it is in faith that God unites the soul to Himself by spiritual marriage:

". . . the soul must enter the second night of the spirit where—perfectly detaching sense and spirit from all sweetness and from all these apprehensions—these communications will guide it *on the road of obscure and pure faith*, the proper and adequate means of Union, as it is written: '*I will espouse thee to Me in faith*,' that is, I will unite Myself to thee in faith."[2]

". . . the soul cannot put on a better garment, as the ground of the other virtues, than the white garment of faith, without which 'it is impossible to please God.' But with a living faith the soul is pleasing and acceptable unto God, who says so Himself by the mouth of the prophet: '*I will espouse thee to Me in faith.*' It is as if He said to the soul, If thou wilt be united and betrothed to Me, thou must draw near clad interiorly in faith."[3]

"The soul vehemently desiring to be united to the Bridegroom, and seeing that there is no help or succour in created things, turns towards Faith, as to that which gives it the most vivid vision of the Beloved, and adopts it as the means to that end. *And, indeed, there is no other way of*

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[1] *The Obscure Night of the Soul*, Book I., ch. xi. L. T. I, p. 359.

[2] *Ibid.*, Book II, ch. ii. L. T. I, p. 377.

[3] *Ibid.*, Book II, ch. xxi. L. T. I, p. 442.

attaining to true union, to the spiritual espousals of God, according to the words of the prophet: 'I will espouse thee to Me in faith.'"[1]

And here is something still more definite, if anything can be more definite: mystical knowledge is faith itself. This is said expressly by the holy Doctor. After speaking of the plain visions of God vouchsafed, according to him, to St. Paul, Moses, and Elias, he adds:

"Now, though, in the ordinary course, these visions cannot be clearly and distinctly seen in this life, the effect of them may be felt in the very substance of the soul, through the instrumentality of a loving knowledge, in the most sweet touch and union pertaining to the spiritual impressions, of which, by the grace of God, I shall speak hereafter. . . . I shall speak of it when I treat of the *mystical*, confused, or obscure *intelligence*, and explain how, in this loving and obscure *knowledge*, God unites Himself with the soul, eminently and divinely. For *this loving obscure knowledge, which is Faith*, serves, in a manner, in this life as means of the divine union, as the light of glory hereafter serves for the Beatific Vision."[2]

"Faith is the only means of attaining to the mystical union;—this union takes place in faith;—mystical knowledge is faith." What can be plainer than this? It is impossible to go on quoting such passages indefinitely,

[1] *A Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza XII. L. T. 33, p. 62.
[2] *The Ascent*, Book II, ch. xxiv. L. T. I, pp. 170, 171.

but the following references may be given: *The Living Flame*, Stanza III, line iii, § 9; Stanza III, line i. *A Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza XXIX.

Indeed, it is admitted that such is the teaching of St. John of the Cross. But, it is said, it is not a case of ordinary faith, but of a "faith that imparts sight"![1] Now, we must get a clear idea of what this phrase means; it must not be forgotten that this affirmation is made to maintain the position that this kind of faith denotes a specifically different knowledge from that which comes from ordinary faith. And this is what St. John of the Cross is supposed to have meant to say! No. Had St. John of the Cross thought of two kinds of faith, he would certainly have somewhere said as much; and had such an idea been suggested to him, he would have said that there is only one kind of supernatural faith; he would have added that a "faith which imparts sight" is inconceivable because it would contradict itself; he often said faith was obscure, that contemplation is called a

[1] R. P. Poulain, *Grâces d'oraison*, ch. xv, No. 43.—There is, indeed, in contemplation an infused faith effected by the operation of the Holy Ghost. But it cannot be a specifically distinct kind of knowledge akin to vision.

night because it is wrought by faith; and finally, he says expressly that this faith is the theological virtue of faith.[1]

Hence our conclusion holds good. To St. John of the Cross mystical knowledge is faith, a superhuman faith no doubt, a faith which is more luminous and sure, but still a faith which is "a veil," because in this world "all the veils are not drawn back, that of faith remaining."[2]

Let us now cite a few passages to show *wherein lies this union with God* to which faith leads. It is worth while knowing that it consists in the love of God; and that therefore there is no better way of preparing oneself for it than by fostering this love in oneself. The following passage is very instructive on the point. In vain, unless there be entire renunciation, "will the soul make any pretence of attaining to its full transformation into God":

"The reason is this: *the estate of divine union consists in the total transformation of the will into the will of God*, in such a way that every movement of the will shall be always the movement of the will of God only. This is the reason why, in this state, two wills are said to be one—my will and

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. i.

[2] *The Living Flame*, Stanza II, lines i, ii. L. T. II, p. 299.

God's will—so that the will of God is also that of the soul. But if the soul then cleaves to any imperfection, contrary to the will of God, His will is not done, for the soul wills that which God wills not. It is clear, therefore, that, if the soul is to be united in love and will with God, every desire of the will must first of all be cast away, however slight it may be; that is, we must not deliberately and knowingly assent with the will to any imperfection, and we must have such power over it, and such liberty, as to reject every such desire the moment we are aware of it. I say knowingly, for without deliberation and a clear perception of what we are doing, or because it is not wholly in our power, we may easily give way to imperfections and venial sins, and to those natural desires of which I have just spoken."[1]

Here is a similar passage :

"(This union of likeness) takes effect when two wills, the will of God and the will of the soul, are conformed together, neither desiring aught repugnant to the other. Thus the soul, when it shall have driven away from itself all that is contrary to the divine will, becomes *transformed in God by love.*"[2]

A little further on, he shows what must be done to attain to such a point :

"Hence it becomes more evident that the fitting disposition for this union is, not that the soul should understand, taste, *feel*, or imagine anything on the subject of the nature of God, or any other thing whatever, but only that pureness and love which is perfect resignation, and complete detachment from all things for God alone."[3]

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[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book I, ch. xi. L. T. I, p. 40.

[2] *Ibid.*, Book II, ch. v. L. T., p. 66.

[3] *Ibid.*, L. T., p. 69.

In another place, after repeating the necessity of total detachment, he describes the admirable state of the transformed soul :

"All this is the work of God ; wrought with a view to withdraw the faculties of the soul from all objects whatever, and to concentrate them upon Himself. . . .

"Here we may perceive, in some degree, how great and how vehement is this burning of love in the spirit when God gathers and collects together all the strength, faculties, and desires of the soul, spiritual and sensitive, so that their harmonious combination may direct all its energies and all its forces towards the real and perfect fulfilment of the first commandment of the law, which comprehends within its scope the whole nature and gifts of man ; namely, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength.' "[1]

There is certainly a surprisingly *intimate sense of the presence of God* obtainable by those who are perfectly united with Him. And this is not beyond the power of faith and love. According to St. John of the Cross their results are wonderful. There is a *sort of divine possession :*

"When a soul has advanced so far on the spiritual road as to be lost to all the natural methods of communing with God ; when it seeks Him no longer by meditation, images, impressions, nor by any other created ways, or representations of sense, but only by rising above them all, *in the joyful communion with Him by faith and love*, then it may be

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[1] *The Obscure Night of the Soul*, Book II, ch. xi. L. T. I, pp. 406, 407.

said to have gained God of a truth, because it has truly lost itself as to all that is not God, and also as to itself."[1]

It is even still more than this; it is a kind of conception of God in the soul:

"It seems to say, How canst thou continue in the body, seeing that the touches of love—these are the arrows—with which the Beloved pierces thy heart are alone sufficient to deprive thee of life? These touches of love make the soul and the heart so fruitful of the knowledge and love of God, that they may well be called *conceptions of God.* 'From thy conceptions of the Beloved.' That is, of His greatness, beauty, wisdom, grace, and power."[2]

God thereby is made present, so says St. John of the Cross, like everybody else. Moreover he explains the nature of this presence very well. There are, indeed, three kinds of divine presence, says he: (1) His presence in essence which is found even in sinners; (2) His presence by sanctifying grace in all the just; (3) "The third is His presence *of spiritual affection.* God is wont to show His presence in many devout souls in divers ways of refreshment, joy, and gladness; yet *this, like the others, is secret,* for He does not show Himself as He is, because the condition of our mortal life does not admit of it."[3]

Through certain *exceptional* graces some-

[1] *A Spiritual Canticle,* Stanza XXIX. L. T. II, p. 159.
[2] *Ibid.,* Stanza VIII. L. T. II, p. 47.
[3] *Ibid.,* Stanza XI. L. T. II, p. 55.

times given in union, God comes to communicate Himself, according to St. John of the Cross, by a sort of touch that leaves a divine impress.[1] Several authors are of opinion that these graces are of another order. Perhaps. However, St. John of the Cross does not seem to think so, since he says that "they are analogous with the spirit of prophecy."[2] And here is a wonderful description of them :

"What the soul tastes now in this touch of God, is, in truth, though not perfectly, a certain foretaste of everlasting life. It is not incredible that it should be so when we believe, as we do believe, that this touch is substantial, and that the substance of God touches the substance of the soul. Many saints have experienced it in this life. The sweetness of delight which this touch occasions baffles all description. . . . Let him who has been favoured with them judge of them by himself, feel them and enjoy them, and be silent about them."[3]

It is the greatest of divine graces, says the holy writer. He describes it as an actually felt experience. It is, however, a good thing to compare with his description the explanation he gives elsewhere of these wonderful spiritual feelings. "There are two kinds of these Distinct Spiritual Impressions. The first kind is

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. xxvii.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza II, line iv. L. T. II, p. 243.

in the affection of the will. The second, *though also in the will*, yet because it is most intense, high, profound, and secret, seems not to touch the will, but to have been wrought in the very substance of the soul."[1]

The teaching of St. Teresa.—We must not expect to find in St. Teresa's writings philosophical explanations of the same precision as in those of St. John of the Cross. But her description of spiritual phenomena is as exact and as living. But the most minute analysis would try in vain to find in it that supposed special knowledge, a kind of vision of God, which certain writers try to get people to accept. The saint constantly opposes mystical knowledge to vision. "Then the feeling of the presence of God would suddenly seize me. It was absolutely impossible for me not to believe that He was within me, or that I was not quite lost in Him. *It was not a vision;* it is what, I believe, is called mystical theology."[2]

Later on, she explains how the soul has the sense of the presence of God:

"The great God wishes the soul to know that He is near it; that it can thus speak to Him without sending Him

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. xxxii. L. T. I, p. 201.

[2] *Life*, ch. x.

messengers or uplifting its voice, because through His nearness He hears the least movement of the lips. This may seem a strange way of speaking: do we not know, indeed, that God always hears us since He is near us? There is no doubt of it. But this supreme and adorable Master wishes us to take note of His hearing us, and to experience *the effects of His presence.* And He displays His design of working in a particular manner in our souls, by flooding them with a great inward and outward satisfaction. . . ."[1]

Perhaps St. Teresa has nowhere expressed her thought more plainly than in this passage in which she sets the mystical knowledge of God in opposition to intellectual vision:

"(Vision) is not like the sensible presence of God which is often felt by those who are favoured with the prayer of union and quiet. The soul no sooner puts itself in prayer than it appears *to find someone to speak to; it understands that it is being hearkened to through the inward effects* of felt grace, *through an ardent love, a lively faith,* firm resolutions, and great tenderness of feeling. This grace is no doubt a great gift, and those who receive it ought to hold it in the highest esteem because it is a very lofty kind of prayer, but it is not a kind of vision. *Only the effects* show the presence of God; it is a way whereby He makes Himself felt by the soul."[2]

With regard to the prayer of union, in which the vision of God is more distinct, St. Teresa writes in the same fashion:

"But, you will say, how can the soul hear and see that it has been in God and God in it, since during this union it *neither sees nor hears?* I reply that it does not see Him then, but that it sees Him clearly afterwards on coming to

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[1] *Life,* ch. xiv. [2] *Ibid.,* ch. xxvii.

itself, *not by vision*, but by a certainty that remains with it, and such as God alone can give.[1] But how, it may be said, can we have so great a certainty as to what we see not? To that I know not what to answer. These are secrets of the omnipotence of God which it is not for me to fathom."[2]

St. Teresa was favoured by many graces of a miraculous order: in her life visions and supernatural sayings seem to abound. Nevertheless these are not the principal cause of her ecstasies. In her *First Relation* to her confessors, she expresses herself thus: "I feel myself suddenly seized by this recollection and elevation of spirit without being able to resist it. And this happens before I have received any vision or heard any utterance, and without my even knowing where I am; only my soul seems to be lost in God."

Elsewhere she says her visions are neither habitual nor common.[3] Hence, according to St. Teresa, in contemplation there is no knowledge of any other order.

The teaching of St. Francis of Sales.—Nor does St. Francis of Sales think that any other light is necessary than the light of faith to

[1] Here note the exact likeness of this "infused certainty" to that of "superhuman faith" previously mentioned.

[2] *The Interior Castle*, Fifth Mansion, ch. i.

[3] *Ibid.*, Sixth Mansion, ch. ix.

unite the soul to God in contemplation. His mind is everywhere perfectly clear. In his *Treatise of the Love of God*[1] he shows that in contemplation one can love more than one knows. Why? Because "our wills are not directed to their object by a natural knowledge, but by the *light of faith*, which assures us of the infinity of the good which is in God and gives us sufficient grounds for loving Him with all our might."

He adds: "Only a little feeling stimulates the pack to the hunt. Thus, dear Theotima, an obscure knowledge, surrounded with many clouds as is that of faith, is infinitely stirring to the love of goodness which we perceive through it."

Another reason for loving more than one knows in contemplation is that in it one tastes the good to which one gets attached, that is God: "Tasting of any good makes us love it much more than all the knowledge one can obtain of it. We begin to love through the knowledge faith gives us of God's goodness, which we afterwards relish and enjoy by love. . . ." And he adds, this is why "St. Catherine of Genoa loved God more than Ockham the theologian: the latter knew Him by knowledge, the

[1] Book VI, ch. iv.

former by experience." This text shows clearly what St. Francis of Sales, like St. Bonaventure and the whole of tradition, means by the experimental knowledge of God.

St. Francis of Sales has given a minute analysis of the manner in which the mystical recollection of contemplation, and the other higher graces that follow it, may occur. Let us note a vivid picture of the knowledge it imparts to the soul.

Recollection takes place in this fashion :

". . . It sometimes happens that our Lord imperceptibly diffuses through the soul a certain gentle sweetness which proves His presence, and then the powers, and even the external senses of the soul, by giving a kind of consent, turn in that interior direction in which is the most amiable and beloved Bridegroom. . . .

". . . Now this sense of satisfaction may be experienced in a similar manner by those who after communicating *feel with the certainty of faith* that their Saviour is very really present in body and soul. . . . And it happens to many saints and devout among the faithful that, having received the Holy Sacrament, their soul is gathered up and all their faculties become recollected, not only to adore the sovereign King newly present within them, but on account of the incredible consolation and spiritual refreshment they get *from feeling by faith* the divine germ of immortality in their souls. . . ."[1]

The saint observes that " this gentle recollection not only comes about through the sense of the divine presence within our hearts, but in

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. vii.

whatever way we put ourselves in that holy presence."[1] He knew a soul who was thrown by the least reminder of the presence of God into a kind of ecstasy, "and who continued as if destitute of life, with all the senses benumbed."[2]

I should like to go on with these quotations and to show how "an overwhelming warmth of feeling" liquefies the soul;[3] how "the goad of desire," "of insatiable desire," wounds and hurts,[4] etc.

Let me rather refer the reader to these helpful and beautiful pages. . . . I will only quote the wonderful passage in which the holy writer exhibits the prayer of union proceeding from a feeling of love:

"Thus a feeling of charity, *e.g.*, How good God is! having entered the heart, unites with His goodness; but being retained for some time like a precious perfume, it pervades the soul thoroughly, permeates and expands the will, and becomes incorporated, so to speak, with our spirit, growing ever more closely bound to us in every way and uniting us with itself. . . . In the same way, the sense of heavenly goodness expressed by the saying of St. Bruno: 'O goodness!' or by that of St. Thomas: 'My Lord and my God!' or by that of St. Mary Magdalene: 'Master!' or by that of St. Francis: 'My God and my all!' this sense, I say, abiding for some time in a loving heart

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[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. vii.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, Book VI, ch. xii.
[4] *Ibid.*, Book VI, ch. xiii.

dilates and expands and enters deeper and deeper into the mind, drenching it more and more with its savour, thus increasing union just as does some precious ointment or balm falling on cotton and mixing and uniting with it to such an extent by small degrées, that at last one can hardly say whether the cotton be scented or scent itself. Oh! how happy is the soul which, in the tranquillity of its heart, lovingly preserves the holy sense of the presence of God! for its union with the divine goodness will perpetually increase and permeate its whole spirit with its infinite suavity!"[1]

Thus, a feeling expressed in the words, "How good God is!" or any others like them, may produce union or ecstasy; any thought of God may strike and "arrest" a loving soul, because this soul "feels by the certainty of faith" that its God is present. Moreover, these effects do not take place at will, but only as it may please God to produce them by His grace.

Such is the very simple and comforting doctrine of the great masters of mysticism. Let us repeat that these masters, so solemnly authorized by the Church, are our natural guides.

Corollary: The definition of mystical contemplation.

In conclusion, let us try to gather together what we have analyzed into sections, and to

[1] Book VII, ch. ii.

combine the different elements we have been considering one by one, in order to reconstruct the psychological fact known as contemplation.

What is contemplation? "Mystical theology," writes St. John of the Cross, "is the mysterious and supernatural knowledge of God. Those who are spiritual call it contemplation."[1] Such, indeed, is the traditional doctrine; but St. John of the Cross gives other and much more descriptive definitions of it. He constantly calls it "a loving waiting upon God." In a passage already quoted, he amplifies this definition into a real picture.

"The soul must confine itself to being lovingly intent upon God without specifically eliciting other acts beyond those to which He inclines it; it must be as it were passive, making no efforts of its own, purely, *simply, and lovingly intent* upon God, as a man who opens his eyes with loving attention."[2]

"Lovingly intent upon God"; a simple and loving glance directed towards God, say others: such is contemplation. This is just the definition given by St. Francis of Sales: "Contemplation is nothing but an attention of mind to things divine, directed thereto with loving simplicity and constancy."

[1] *A Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza XXVII.

[2] *The Living Flame of Divine Love*, Stanza III, line iii, § 6. L. T. II, p. 269.

This definition is explained word for word by St. Francis of Sales in four chapters—iii to vi—of the sixth Book of his *Treatise of the Love of God.* And herê we have the essence of contemplation, and therefore contemplation as it is always and everywhere ; its phenomena may and will vary infinitely ; love is more various in its effects than electricity, from the sweet quietness in which it wins souls as if it were a kind of caress, to the union in which it binds them immovably to the bosom of God, and to the ecstasy in which it seems to let them get lost and as it were fused into infinity. But contemplation will always be a loving waiting upon God, a keeping of the mind intent upon Him with simplicity and constancy.[1]

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[1] What is the relation between *this loving expectancy* and the *sense of the presence* of God?

If by the sense of the presence of God is meant an actual endeavour to represent to oneself God as present, then that is not contemplation. But there are souls which remain long, and even habitually and without any actual effort, with a certain sense of the presence of God. God accompanies them, and is present to them like the air or space. When they desire to pray they have no effort to make to be with Him, and usually they spend their spare time in very sweet inward intercourse with Him. This kind of infused certainty is really contemplation; and all those who enjoy it, even if on principle they spend their time for prayer in reflection or reading, are contemplatives.

And, in fact, what is this sense of God but a kind of loving attention? a sort of simple and fixed regard, with

This expectancy is an act of faith. Faith in a way opens up the infinite to a soul; and some who are specially favoured by the Holy Ghost find God whenever they wish. Loving expectancy is a love that makes one try to find God, a love that takes pleasure in His presence. "Contemplation," says St. Francis of Sales, "is the daughter of love." It is a lasting or permanent direction of one's attention, for the soul is never tired of thinking of its Beloved; a simple expectancy, for the soul which is possessed by love desires only to love and can do nothing but love; the name of the Beloved

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the simplicity and steadfastness of contemplation? If the whole of the definition of contemplation lie herein, here we have contemplation itself also. Let it not be said: "We cannot have this feeling at will." Certainly we cannot. Only ask those who experience it whether they could get it of themselves in the past, or whether they can recover it when God withdraws it from them. It is true that it may become almost habitual, but so can mystical contemplation, as St. John of the Cross constantly says.

We must not, therefore, be surprised if two different words are made use of. Moreover, these two words are often taken the one for the other in all the passages we quote; in the three last, which we have taken from the writings of St. Francis of Sales, the words "feeling God present" are used to describe contemplation; and notably in the last, we read: "Oh! how happy is the soul which, in the tranquillity of its heart, lovingly preserves *the holy sense of the presence of God!*"

Strictly speaking, there is no other *interior life* than that. All the rest leads up to that.

is enough, for the mere mention of that name recalls the object of love in its entirety.

Happy are those who are filled with the Holy Ghost and attracted and absorbed in this fashion by the blessed name of God! He will tear them away from all earthly affections, and unite them indissolubly with their divine first principle. Let them give themselves up more and more to Him; let them offer up the naïve prayer of St. Francis of Sales: "Be my heart-extractor,"[1] and they will be transformed into Him. Such is the ineffable hope, even in this life, of those who are contemplatives.

[1] St. Francis's word is *tire-cœur*, formed like *tire-bouchon*, which is the French for "corkscrew."

CHAPTER II

THE CALL TO CONTEMPLATION

Summary.—§ 1. Two opposite solutions: the reasons for them.—§ 2. The opinion of St. Thomas.—§ 3. The opinion of St. John of the Cross.—§ 4. The opinion of St. Teresa.—§ 5. The opinion of St. Francis of Sales.—§ 6. A distinction that cannot be admitted.—§ 7. The doctrine verified by facts.

My first chapter was plainly quite objective in character. All the ideas it contained and the authorities quoted were borrowed from the great masters. The same will be noted in the

Father Poulain made the following observation on my first article: "The writer says I have termed *secondary* the characteristic I have used to define mystical union. That is true of my former editions; but in the sixth and seventh I have done away with this expression and replaced it with the words *of a second species.*"

I gladly note this correction. The seventh edition reads thus, ch. viii, p. 118 of *Grâces d'oraison:* "The two last theses have taught us the two *principal* characteristics of mystical union. This union has ten characteristics of a second species. . . ."

Father Poulain says that he does not use the word *secondary* in the sense of *a thing of minor importance*, but only of *something different.* May we not, however, be pardoned for thinking just the contrary in seeing it opposed to the term *principal?*

present chapter, because, however traditional the notions put forward may be, some readers may be surprised by them, if they have not thoroughly mastered them, or if they have forgotten them. I am not in any way inflamed with pedagogic zeal, but only desire to illumine the conscience, and have no other motive in writing. First of all, I consulted one manual after another, but could not find the enlightenment I was looking for. But after an earnest study of St. Teresa, I found what I wanted. St. John of the Cross, and then St. Francis of Sales and St. Thomas contributed their share of illumination; and then followed others. And it is solely under their inspiration that I drew up the notes which I am now putting into form. And now I am very pleased to find that the same teaching, drawn from the same sources, is traceable in books and reviews. But I went first of all to the masters themselves to inquire: What is mystical contemplation?—and next, the subject of my present chapter: Who are called to mystical contemplation?

§ 1. — Two opposite solutions: the reasons for them.

For whom is contemplation meant?—To this question there are two opposite replies:

some say, it is for the perfect in general ; it is only for a few privileged souls, say others. Contemplation, according to the former, is the "goal of mental prayer"; meditation, say the latter, is its proper goal. Those who withdraw from the world and are professed in a contemplative religious order, if they are generous and well directed, usually attain to contemplation, says one party ; and the other, in general at any rate, and *a priori*, people may be assured that they will not obtain "a miracle of this sort." Lastly, according to the one, those who pray in earnest and are desirous of giving themselves up to God entirely by all-round detachment usually go on to the contemplative way ; whilst, according to the other, they ought not to regard contemplation at all as the ordinary goal towards which they have to tend, but to keep steadfastly to meditation as the common way, a way much more sure, and quite as capable of leading them on to great holiness.

It is impossible not to see the supreme gravity of this controversy. From it proceed two methods of spiritual direction, and they are almost opposite to one another. In fact, some directors lead people to desire contemplation ; they endeavour to prepare souls for it

and to guide them in the path by constant renunciations and sacrifices; and when they think the time has come, they allow methodical prayer to be given up. Others are never surprised at not finding in their penitents any need of the "loving attention to God," which is contemplation; and they try to exercise them to the end in meditation, however arid, without asking if it be not just the need of thinking of God only that prevents them from thinking of anything else. Plainly, if the former are mistaken, they expose those whom they direct to many fatal illusions, and they waste away their powers in chimerical aspirations. But if they are right, the second are an obstacle to grace; they strongly bind to earth those who desire to fly to heaven. Hence we can understand the vehement indignation of the saints, especially of St. John of the Cross,[1] against those directors who make it their business to remain in ignorance as to this important question.

This is the way those reason who think that the graces of contemplation are rare and negligible facts:—Contemplation is an extraordinary grace, or a grace *gratis data*. Hence, contemplation scarcely ever occurs. Especially

[1] *The Living Flame*, Stanza III, line iii, § 4.

is it not to be desired, or prepared or prayed for. And, in fact, if contemplation be indeed a grace *gratis data*, they would be quite right to infer: Contemplation is very scarce, and one must not think much about it, because few souls are to be met with in such a state: contemplation is not to be desired, because the great ways laid down for all are not to be left; people ought not to prepare themselves for it, for no disposition we may acquire gives us the right to any miracle.—But it happens that the fundamental notion which is their starting-point is not right: contemplation is not a grace *gratis data*, but a grace of personal sanctification, as was shown in my last chapter. Hence, the opinion of this party is unsupported by evidence.

The partisans of the other opinion start from an exactly opposite principle: Contemplation being the effect of certain gifts of the Holy Ghost called into play by divine motions which are actual graces of the same order as the rest, are we not right to infer that these actual graces, except the primary ones which are indispensable to salvation, being given in the ordinary course of Providence by reason of our dispositions, or of the use we make of them, or in virtue of the sacraments, are

within the reach of all who can prepare to receive them? It is, then, a good thing and a useful to desire them, to ask for them, and to prepare oneself for them. But, say these writers, as the graces of contemplation are amongst the highest of actual graces, and as they must also be given with a certain amount of intensity to arrest the soul in "adherence to God," it is not at all surprising that they are rarely observed, especially in any continuous fashion, in those who are at the beginning of the spiritual life. Further, such action of the Holy Ghost is often impeded by special circumstances, since no obstacle must ever be put in the way of God's operation. This is the classic question of exceptions or hindrances. The commonest are a life of too absorbing study, administrative cares, ill-health, and a bad method of mental prayer resulting from mistaken direction. But they infer that, apart from certain particular exceptions and hindrances, souls in a true state of perfection are generally contemplative.

Let it be said at once: This logical doctrine is the traditional doctrine. It can easily be demonstrated so far as the four great teachers already taken as guides are concerned: St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, St. Francis of

Sales, and St. Thomas. This is rather a matter of evidence than of demonstration, for these masters have only to be quoted : they are too explicit to need any commentary. It is also easy, if one will, to corroborate their testimony with that of many others.

§ 2.—The opinion of St. Thomas: the perfect enjoy contemplation.

In addition to the fact that St. Thomas everywhere presupposes this doctrine, he has treated the question *ex professo* in the *Summa*,[1] writing on the Beatitudes. There are, he says, two things to be distinguished in the Beatitudes : the meritorious work : *Beati qui lugent, qui persecutionem . . ., etc.;* and the reward : *Quoniam ipsorum est regnum cœlorum . . . quoniam Deum videbunt . . ., etc.* But, says he, these different rewards in reality make only one, they are different ways of expressing one thing, contemplation. And here is the question he proposes : Are the rewards of the Beatitudes given here below ?[2] Contemplation, he replies, is of two kinds, perfect and primary. Perfect contemplation only exists in heaven ; primary contemplation is that of

[1] 1ª 2æ, q. 69. [2] a. 2.

earth. The latter, as the holy Doctor twice repeats without any distinction or limitation, is received here below by "the holy and the perfect," not by *quidam sancti*, *quidam perfecti*, but by *viri sancti*, *viri perfecti*.

This explicit conclusion necessarily follows from the doctrine he sets forth on the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which was summed up in the last chapter. We all have the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost; there are seven of them specifically distinct from one another, because each of them has to give rise to different acts. God who has placed them in the soul, and who does nothing without an object, did not put them there to be barren like the accursed fig-tree: *Ut quid etiam terram occupat* (Luc. xiii. 7)? Hence He owes it to His wisdom to bring them into play, provided that we put no hindrance in the way. There are two, the gifts of wisdom and understanding, the *proper* acts of which are contemplation.[1] Provided that we place ourselves in the right conditions, God owes it to Himself to bring them into play. Then they will produce in us a passive and superhuman faith and love which form, as has been already shown, what is really contemplation. Given the reservations already

[1] *Summa*, 1ª 2æ, q. 68, a. 7 et a. 6, ad 2, ad 3.

made, we may rightly infer with Alvarez de Paz: "We have only ourselves to blame if we never enjoy the ineffable sweetness of contemplation."[1]

This, too, is what St. Francis of Sales affirms in a more general way of the highest sanctity, which is also an effect of the gifts:

"Why, then, are we not as far advanced in the love of God as St. Augustine, St. Francis, St. Catherine of Genoa or St. Frances? Theotima, it is because God has not given us the grace to be so. But why has not God given us this grace? Because we have not corresponded as we ought to have done with its aspirations. And why have we not corresponded? Because, although we were free, we made a bad use of our freedom. But why did we thus abuse our freedom? Theotima, we must go no further, for, as St. Augustine says, the depravity of the will arises from no other cause than the failure of that which commits sin."[2]

Doubtless, the Holy Ghost bloweth where He listeth; He chooses the most fitting time and manner. But He never fails to pour grace into the soul which is prepared to receive it: *Facienti quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam.* There are those who are quite ready to credit God with their own shortcoming: "It is all very well for the saints," say they, when some good is offered them, "but God

[1] Nos certe in causa sumus quod nunquam contemplationis ineffabilem suavitatem gustemus. *De Orat. Mentali*, lib. i, pars iii, cap. xxvii.

[2] *On the Love of God*, Book II, ch. xi.

has not called us to be saints." Why, then, does He give us so many invitations? Why has He given us the gifts of the Holy Ghost? And what is sanctity? The practice of heroic virtues. What are the gifts of the Holy Ghost? The means for the fulfilment of heroic acts, not heroic in kind, since they comprise all the acts of our moral life, but heroic in perfection and intensity.

Many admit that sanctity is proposed to all those who are of good will, while they dispute any like claim on behalf of contemplation. Nevertheless, the two things go together. The sum-total of gifts produces heroic and superhuman acts, "a working ecstasy," as St. Francis of Sales says; this is sanctity: two of these gifts produce passive and superhuman faith and love; and this is contemplation. Could sanctity be conceived apart from the sublime faith and love brought forth by the gifts? Would it not be stripped of its most beautiful ingredient? Moreover, this is a historic fact to which we shall revert: apart from the martyrs not a single saint has been canonized by the Church unless he was also a great contemplative.

We shall again find this doctrine in many other passages of the writings of St. Thomas in a more or less explicit form, *e.g.*, with

regard to the gift of understanding,[1] and with regard to the gift of wisdom.[2] Nothing can be clearer than what he says.

§ 3.—The opinion of St. John of the Cross: contemplation is the way of the perfect.

We shall now examine the two great writers whose names are identified with mystical knowledge, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa. *Libros de mystica theologia cælesti sapientia refertos conscripsit,* says the Breviary of St. John of the Cross ; and of St. Teresa : *Multa cælestis sapientiæ documenta conscripsit.* Much the same praise is given to the two, and it could not be more beautifully expressed. Now, whoever is able to afford himself the inestimable pleasure of reading their works attentively cannot fail, I think, to see their mind quite clearly.

First of all, take St. John of the Cross. He teaches that meditation is the prayer of beginners ;[3] that it cannot lead very far in the

[1] 2ª 246, q. 45, a. 7 et ad 3.

[2] 2ª 2æ, q. 45, a. 5 et 6.

[3] This doctrine cannot be too attentively noted, though it runs counter to so many prejudices. How many still apply to methodical meditation all that the Fathers say of the need of vocal and mental prayer!

way of perfection, being essentially imperfect; that God would nevertheless lead souls further; that contemplation is the way of the perfect, and that it alone leads on to the goal, to union with God; that God desires to give it; that it is supernatural, it is true, but that God gives it those who will prepare for it as far as their dispositions allow. Each of these points might be developed one after the other; but the ideas are so interwoven that one finds them sometimes accumulated on a single half page of the holy teacher.

Yet *methodical meditation* has but a restricted history. It is an excellent method of prayer, it is true, for such as it suits,—but its use cannot be traced in the Church before the fifteenth century. About that date it began to come into use in some of the religious orders. If it has been so highly extolled since in the name of St. Ignatius, yet it was not he who tried to give it such a vogue. "When anyone entered the Order, he made them follow the *Exercises* for a month in silence. Then the obligatory morning prayer consisted entirely of half an hour of vocal prayers, the recitation of the Little Office of the B.V.M. Those who were professed were only invited in the most general way to give as much of their free time as possible to prayer. This régime lasted about thirty years; then mental prayer gradually came in" (Father Poulain). At the outset the method of Saint-Sulpice was only a very free kind of affective prayer which easily went along with contemplation; but M. Tronson altered it to suit the needs of the seminarists. This was in conformity with the traditional spirit: meditation is extraordinarily useful to beginners (Father Poulain's *Grâces d'oraison*, ch. ii, §§ 66-74).

Let us begin with the following passage, which is very hard upon certain unskilful spiritual directors ; there are, however, many other passages which are much more severe :

"Such directors, not understanding these ways of the Spirit, will very frequently be the cause of souls losing the unction of the delicate ointments, by means of which the Holy Ghost is preparing the soul for Himself : for they will guide them by other means of which they have read, but which are *adapted only for beginners.* These directors knowing how to guide beginners only—and God grant they may know that—*will not suffer their penitents to advance, though it be the will of God, beyond the mere rudiments, acts of reflection and imagination, whereby their profit is extremely little.*"[1]

This needs no comment : it is a definite expression of all the teaching of which a résumé has already been given : meditation, or the work of the reason and the imagination, is only the prayer of beginners ; it cannot take them very far ; and yet God calls souls higher.

The holy writer unfolds his thought at the beginning of the following paragraph :

"In order to have a clear perception of the state of beginners, we must keep in mind that it is one of meditation and of acts of reflection. It is necessary to furnish the soul in this state *with matter for meditation,* that it may make reflections and those interior acts, and avail itself of the sensible spiritual heat and fervour, for this is neces-

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[1] *The Living Flame of Love,* Stanza III, line iii, § 4. L. T. II, p. 267.

sary in order to accustom the senses and desires to good things, so that by satisfying them by the sweetness thereof they may be detached from the world.

"When this is in some degree effected, God begins at once to introduce the soul into the state of contemplation, and that very quickly, especially in the case of Religious, because these, having renounced the world, quickly fashion their senses and desires according to God; they have, therefore, to pass at once from meditation to contemplation."[1]

What can be clearer? Read in this little treatise, *The Living Flame of Love*, about forty pages which form a real little manual of spiritual direction. At the third line of the fourth Stanza, the writer leaves the explanations he has been giving of the spiritual marriage to set forth his ideas as to the conduct of souls. There they are to be found in their most concise form, from § 4 to the end. And here are the same ideas taken from the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*:[2]

"For though such considerations, forms, and methods of meditation may be necessary for beginners, in order to inflame and fill their souls with love, through the instrumentality of sense, as I shall explain hereafter — and though they may serve as remote means of union, through which souls must usually *pass to the goal* and resting-place of spiritual repose—*still they must so make use of them as to pass beyond them, and not dwell upon them for ever. If we*

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[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza III, line iii, § 5. L. T. II, p. 267.

[2] Book II, ch. xii. L. T. I, p. 98.

dwell upon them we shall never reach the goal, which is not like the remote means, neither has it any proximate relation with them."

He also shows the insufficiency of meditation, and God's will to withdraw us from it, in the *Obscure Night of the Soul*:[1]

"As the conduct of beginners in the way of God is mean, in harmony with their tastes and self-love, and as *God wills their advancement*, and to draw them out of their mean way of loving Him to the heights of divine love; *to rescue them from the grovelling work of sense and reflections*, where they so scantily and unseemlily feel after Him; to elevate them to the practice of spirituality, where they may commune with Him more fully, and in greater freedom from their imperfections—being now experienced in the ways of virtue, persevering in meditation and prayer, through the sweetness of which they have been able to disentangle their affections from the things of this world, and acquired some spiritual strength so as to curb their desires; and being now capable of bearing their burdens and enduring aridities, without going back to that more pleasant time when their spiritual exercises abounded in delights, and when the sun of divine favours shone more clearly upon them as they think, God changes that light into darkness, and seals up the door of the fountain of the sweet waters of the Spirit, which they tasted in God as often and as long as they wished. . . . Now at last, God leaves them in darkness so deep that they know not whither to betake themselves with their imaginations and reflections. They cannot now advance a single step with their meditation, as they did before, the inward sense being, as it were, suffocated in that night, and abandoned to dryness so great that they have no more any joy or sweetness in their spiritual exercises as they had before; and in their place they find now nothing but insipidity and bitterness. . . . Recollected persons enter the Obscure

[1] Book I, ch. viii. L. T. I, pp. 346, 347.

Night sooner than others, after they have begun their spiritual course; because they are kept at a greater distance from the occasions of falling away, and because they correct more quickly their worldly desires, which it is requisite to do even at the commencement of the blessed Night of Sense. In general, there elapses no great length of time after they have begun before they enter the night of sense, and most of them do enter it, because they generally suffer aridities."

As may be seen from the foregoing quotations, the exercise of the virtues, and especially of that of spiritual detachment, is an indispensable preliminary to God's guidance of the soul to contemplation. A few further quotations will show that this is a sufficient condition as well as a necessary one.

"Why do so few souls find the entrance of the narrow gate? Because only a few are ready to enter into the void and into complete detachment of spirit."[1] "Attachment to God and to the creature are two contrary things."[2] —"For as the soul is justly deprived *of this divine light* if it fixes the eyes of the will on any other light, proceeding from anything that is not God, for then its vision is confined to that object; so also the soul by a certain fitness deserves the divine light, if it shuts its eyes against all objects whatever, and opens them only to the vision of God."[3] ". . . provided the soul of his penitent be detached from all particular knowledge, from every desire and inclination of sense; provided it abide in the self-denial of poverty of spirit, emptied of darkness and sweetness, weaned from the breast,—for this is all the soul should look to, and all that the spiritual director is to consider as within the province of them both—it is impossible—

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[1] *The Ascent*, Book II, ch. vii. [2] *Ibid.*, Book I, ch. vi.
[3] *A Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza X. L. T. II, pp. 53, 54.

according to the course of the divine goodness and mercy—that God will not perform His own work, yea, more impossible than that the sun should not shine in a cloudless sky."[1]—"God gives more to him who has more, and His gifts are multiplied in proportion to the previous endowments of the soul."[2]

Read the context, and note that here there is no question of a mere constant ascent in holiness, but of progress in mystical contemplation. Furthermore, these words "the night of the senses," "passive night," and "supernatural light" which frequently occur in these passages have no other meaning in the writings of St. John of the Cross.

But now comes the objection: Since it is supernatural, what can our dispositions have to do with it? This objection is thus anticipated by the saint:

"God, indeed, must raise it (the soul) up into this supernatural state; but the soul, *so far as it can, must also be in good dispositions, which it may acquire by the help which God supplies. And so when the soul rejects these forms and empties itself of them, God causes it to enter into the enjoyment of this union. When God does this the soul is passive,* as I shall explain in speaking of the Passive Night; and He will then bestow upon it the habit of perfect Union, *proportional to its good dispositions,* when it shall seem good to Him to do so."[3]

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[1] *The Living Flame of Love,* Stanza III, line iii, § 9. L. T. II, p. 275.

[2] *A Spiritual Canticle,* Stanza XXXIII. L. T. II, p. 177.

[3] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Book III, ch. i. L. T. I, p. 211.

Here the character of the supernatural grace is plain : it is not a gratuitous grace for which dispositions cannot be prepared, but a grace *gratum faciens* for which God allows, and usually requires, our co-operation. Here, too, it is clear that the saint means to devote whole books to an explanation of the ideas set forth in the above passage. Let us conclude his explanation with the following passage in which he says he affords a résumé of his teaching :

"It appears, then, from all this that the soul, when it shall have purified and emptied itself from all these intelligible forms and images, will then dwell in this pure and simple light, transformed thereto in the state of perfection. This light is ever ready to be communicated to the soul, but does not flow in because of the forms and veils of the creature that embarrass the soul. Take away these hindrances and coverings, as I shall hereafter explain, and the soul in detachment and poverty of spirit will then, being pure and simple, be transformed in the pure and sincere Wisdom of God who is the Son. For then *that which is natural having failed, that which is divine flows supernaturally into the soul ;* since God leaves nothing empty that He does not fill."[1]

Hence, according to St. John of the Cross, the usual law of divine Providence is as follows : meditation to begin with ; but, if one is faithful to the practice of the virtues and of universal

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. xv. L. T. I, pp. 113, 114.

detachment, God calls the soul to contemplation, and by contemplation to perfect union with Himself.

Such is the common rule. Are there any exceptions to it? St. John of the Cross seems to admit some. And what are the causes of these? He does not venture to say, for "God alone knows." In fact, after speaking of the dryness which is met with at the outset of contemplation, he speaks of another kind of dryness which is given apart from this way, and which is but temporary:

"God leads these persons into this night *only* to try them and to humble them, and to correct their desires, that they may not grow up spiritual gluttons, and not for the purpose of leading them into the spiritual way, which is Contemplation. God does not elevate to perfect contemplation everyone that is tried in the spiritual way, and He alone knoweth why. Hence it is that these persons are never wholly weaned from the breasts of meditations and reflections, but only at intervals and at certain seasons." [1]

This is the important declaration of the saint: "*God does not elevate to perfect contemplation everyone that is tried in the spiritual way, and He alone knoweth why.*" Some commentators have less hesitation. They think the reason is very easily explained. Such

[1] *The Obscure Night of the Soul*, Book I, ch. ix. L. T. I, p. 353.

souls as these are in the normal way. There is nothing to be surprised about. The others are exceptions. St. John of the Cross, indeed, is surprised, and never thinks of an explanation which completely contradicts all his other teaching. Hence, he is surprised ; but he does not try to fathom further God's plans.

Along with him we may make a note of the exception, if it be one : but the meaning of the passage must not be forced. " God does not elevate to perfect contemplation ": but *perfect* contemplation is very high indeed. " Everyone that is tried in the spiritual way ": " everyone that is tried " is very vague. Above all, let it be well noted, the souls of whom St. John of the Cross here speaks as not being elevated by God to perfect contemplation are such as are not raised to any very high degree of perfection. In fact, the holy writer elsewhere speaks of two causes of dryness which he is here referring to. And he writes thus : " One must only give up meditation when one can no longer devote oneself to it, that is to say, one must only leave it off when our Lord stops it *either for the trial of the purgative life*, or else to elevate the soul to a higher degree of contemplation." " For the trial of the purgative life ": this is the first cause which

we are now dealing with. Hence it is something not to be looked for in those who are far advanced in perfection. Let it not be said therefore, relying upon St. John of the Cross, that souls may be perfect, and yet devoid of contemplation. St. John of the Cross often says the opposite, as in this passage: "Those who are called to advance in perfection will ever enter more deeply into the night, and the work of sensible purification will be fulfilled."[1] "In vain does a beginner exercise himself in the thorough mortification of his acts and passions, he will never attain to a complete, or even to any considerable purification, unless God operate within him by the night of the senses."[2] Lastly, read over again the four or five passages already quoted as to the insufficiency of meditation.

Hence, the mystery that baffles St. John of the Cross is merely this: Why does not God lead certain souls to a higher degree of sanctity and to perfect contemplation? This is the mystery of predestination. *O altitudo!* But it is of no special consequence in the question now under consideration.

[1] *The Obscure Night*, Book I, ch. ix.
[2] *Ibid.*, Book I, ch. vii.

§ 4.—The opinion of St. Teresa: God calls all who will.

St. Teresa is too high an authority for attempts not to have been made to make what she says tell in favour of all sorts of views and to quote her in support of the most conflicting opinions. It is hardly disputed that at any rate in certain of her works she has upheld the opinions set forth, as already shown, by St. John of the Cross and St. Thomas. In fact, in their favour are quoted, as we shall quote, passages of dazzling clearness. But it is sometimes assumed that she varied in her teaching, that she contradicts herself; and yet no one has ever cited any definite passage to prove this: they are satisfied with arguing, with making inferences from certain declarations that have nothing to do with the question, exaggerated inferences which have been expressly repudiated by St. Teresa herself.

Well, here is the difficulty, at first sight a great one: St. Teresa recognizes this when she undertakes to explain it. Among St. Teresa's religious were a few nuns who had not the gift of contemplation, and the saint felt that she had to console them, as she shows us in her writings. Hence she tells them "that

God does not lead us all by the same road . . . that although all the religious in the convent are diligent in prayer, it does not follow that they must all be contemplatives, for that is impossible . . .; that they may be saved without contemplation, and since God does not demand it as a condition of admittance into His paradise, it will not be required of the religious in her house . . .; and that if they have great virtues, they will not fail to be perfect."[1]

Hence it is inferred that there are two ways of perfection. One can be a great saint without contemplation. What seems to tell still more strongly is the example adduced by the saint: "I know a person of ripe age, of great virtue and penance, a hearty servant of God, who daily sets apart several hours to vocal prayer. Her mental prayer is nil, for she is incapable of it. The most she can do is to stop a little while, slowly uttering her vocal prayers."[2]

And yet two chapters further on, as we shall see, St. Teresa absolutely repudiates the inferences which people attempt to draw from her words. In fact, their bearing is exaggerated.

First, she does not say that the great saint

[1] *The Way of Perfection*, ch. xix.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. xix., Ed. Bouix-Peyre, p. 96.

of whom she speaks was not a contemplative. No doubt, she could not practise mental prayer, but from vocal prayer one may proceed to the highest contemplation: "*As I have already said*, I know many whom God makes to pass from the simple exercise of vocal prayer, such as I have described, to sublime contemplation, without understanding how it takes place. I knew one who could only pray vocally, and who, in doing this, had everything else; but without vocal prayer she fell into intolerable wandering of mind. . . . I saw that as she said the *Pater* she entered into pure contemplation, and that our Saviour raised her up to divine union."[1] It is quite possible that the person of whom the saint spoke before was in the same case, if she be not the same person.

Let it also be noted that the saint assures us that there are several ways, not of attaining the highest holiness, but of going to heaven. But no one claims that contemplation is indispensable to salvation. It is impossible for all the Carmelites to be contemplatives, just as it is impossible not to commit venial sins. But the saint positively declares that all "are *called* to prayer and contemplation."[2]

[1] *The Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxii, pp. 169-170.
[2] *The Castle*, Fifth Mansion, ch. i.

In the very chapter in which St. Teresa comforts her daughters as best she can, she makes this inference: "Do what you can, prepare for contemplation with the zeal of which I have spoken, and *the divine Master will grant it you.* If He refuse it (*which I do not think He will*, if your detachment and humility are sincere), it is because He wishes to keep this joy back for you until He shall give you all the joys of paradise."[1]

Hence at most one can only presume that this is an exception. But St. Teresa does not think so. Two chapters further on, chapter xxix, she sets forth her mind still more clearly and emphatically. Listen to the following animated passage:

"My daughters, why do I show you the victor's palm before the battle by revealing to you the happiness of the soul which, after reaching the celestial fountain (contemplation), quaffs deeply of its living waters? It is to keep you from being beaten by the sufferings and impediments on the way, and to kindle your courage so that it may never give in to weariness. Otherwise, it might happen, as I said, that having reached the very edge of the fountain, and having no more to do than to bend down and drink, you would let everything go and lose this advantage, thinking you had not the strength to attain to it, and that you were never meant to receive it.—Consider that our Lord invites us all; and since He is the very truth, we cannot doubt Him. If this banquet was not for everyone,

[1] *The Way of Perfection*, ch. xix, p. 98.

He would not invite us all; and even if He did invite us, He would not say: I will give you to drink. He might have said: Come all of you, you will lose nothing by serving Me; and as for the heavenly water, I will give it to whomsoever I will. But since He puts no restriction either on His promise nor on His invitation, *I am sure that all those who stop not on the way will one day drink the living water.* May our Lord, who promises it to us, grant us all the grace of seeking for it as we ought."[1]

Nothing could be more categorical.—But, exclaim those who do not accept this doctrine, it is just the opposite of what the saint said before.—No, all can be reconciled, on condition that we do not try to make St. Teresa say more than she actually does. To go on with the quotation already begun:

"This last chapter seems to contradict what I said previously, *when, to comfort those* who do not attain to contemplation, I maintained that there are several ways of going to God, just as there are several mansions in heaven. And this I still maintain. Our Lord knew our weakness, and taking counsel of His goodness, He has arranged helps for us according to our needs. *Nevertheless, He did not bid some to go by one road and others by another; but in the abundance of His mercy He grants all to go and drink of this fountain of life.* May He be for ever blessed for this! . . . Therefore He forbids the approach to no one, but He invites us all openly and in a loud voice."[2]

How then can it be maintained, relying upon St. Teresa, that there is a theory of bifurcation according to which God leads certain souls to

[1] *The Way of Perfection*, ch. xxi, p. 114.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. xxii, p. 115.

holiness by the extraordinary ways of contemplation, whilst others are kept at a distance from these ways by the providence of God?[1]

That St. Teresa contradicts herself cannot be admitted: the saint repeats the same thing from first to last in all her writings. One may be misled by the fact that she is careful to stir up her daughters to the practice of the virtues, to reiterate that sanctity consists in conformity with the will of God, and that this is what she has always desired for herself.[2] She says, indeed, that without any *very extraordinary*[3]

[1] From the seventeenth century onwards, attempts were made to duplicate the unitive way by dividing it into an ordinary and non-mystical unitive way and into an extraordinary, contemplative, and mystical way. Before then, perfection, unitive way, contemplative way, and mystical way, were all identified. This comes out clearly from the whole of the present chapter, specially from the passage of St. Teresa above quoted, and from all the quotations from St. John of the Cross, in which he says that beginners meditate, whilst those who are advancing, and the perfect, begin to contemplate and to attain to union. If, according to St. Francis of Sales, when love reigns in a soul it gives rise to contemplation, then those who reach sanctity without being contemplatives would have a sanctity without love! How extraordinary it is to think of one sanctification by ordinary graces and of another, an extraordinary sanctification, by graces *gratis datæ*, since the latter are not in themselves sanctifying graces! (See Abbé Saudreau, *Etat Mystique*, ch. xiii.)

[2] *The Interior Castle*, Fifth Mansion, ch. iii, and *The Book of the Foundations*, ch. v.

[3] *The Interior Castle*, ch. iii.

graces, *without ecstasy*, and perhaps with nothing but ordinary graces, one may attain to a certain sort of perfection : " No doubt, with the Lord's help, and by following the path laid down by those who have written about prayer, by applying the principles and means indicated, one may attain *to perfection and to a remarkable degree of detachment*, but only after many years and much work."[1]

Despite this restriction, she is plainly in *verbal* opposition with St. John of the Cross who declares that one cannot attain to any *remarkable degree of purification* without contemplation. But these words are of a very relative character. It will be shown that in reality both saints are in perfect accord. Everywhere St. Teresa declares the extraordinary efficacy of the graces which she calls supernatural. The lines preceding those we have just quoted run as follows : " No one can conceive, unless he has experienced it, the wonderful graces with which God enriches the soul in a state of rapture. It seems as if all our own efforts could never carry us so far."[2] She calls the prayer of union a " short cut "[3]

[1] *Life*, ch. xxi.
[2] *The Interior Castle*, Fifth Mansion, ch. iii.
[3] *Ibid.*

to sanctity. And lastly, in hosts of passages, as in the following, she says that the detachment of the saints is impossible without some special grace:

"Some desire to fly before God has given them wings. . . . In books on prayer they read of various means for rising to contemplation, and not so far having the strength to put them into practice, they are upset and lose heart. You must, say these books, despise the opinion of the world and be better pleased that evil shall be said of you than good; you must think nothing of honour; your detachment from your relations must be entire, in such wise that, unless they give themselves to prayer, their dealings must be no concern of ours and be an annoyance to us; and many other like things. But, in my opinion, these are purely divine gifts; and feelings which are so contrary to our inclinations must be classed with *supernatural goods*. . . . Let such persons confide unreservedly in the goodness of God: one day He will change their desires into realization, provided that they persevere in prayer and do *for their part* what lies within their power."[1]

This does not mean that St. Teresa is unaware that God, as a general rule, only gives these signal graces to such as prepare themselves to receive them. Our co-operation, in her opinion as well as in that of St. John of the Cross, is an indispensable, as well as a sufficient condition for their reception:

"I doubt not in the least, my daughters, that it is your wish to reach this state (the prayer of quiet) soon, and

[1] *The Life*, ch. xxxi.

you are right. For the soul, I repeat, cannot understand either the graces with which God then favours it, nor the love wherewith He draws it near unto Himself. Therefore you are quite justified in *desiring to learn how such a happy result is attained. I will tell you as far as I know;* yet I shall only speak of the ordinary conduct of God, and leave on one side those *extraordinary* cases in which He grants such a grace solely because He wills. When He thus acts, He has His own reasons which it is not for us to fathom. . . . First of all, my daughters, carry out what I have recommended in the former Mansions; and then, humility, humility, for this is what our Lord allows Himself to be overcome by, yielding to all our desires."[1]

Thus, one prepares oneself for these graces and attains to them; and when one receives them solely because it is God's good pleasure, it is because one is outside the ordinary providence of God. Now this is what we find in the *Interior Castle*, one of the last of St. Teresa's works, written only five years before her death. Nor is it only the passage above quoted which enables us to grasp the mind of St. Teresa, but the whole of her book. The *Interior Castle* is a spiritual treatise in which seven degrees, whereby the soul rises to perfect union with God, are described as Mansions or inner chambers of the soul. In the first Mansion or degree, there is no question of prayer; in the second, there are meditation and spiritual read-

[1] *The Interior Castle*, Fourth Mansion, ch. ii.

ing ; in the third, the saint does not think that "God gives many spiritual tastes"; "it is in the fourth Mansion that God favours souls with spiritual tastes. . . ." These spiritual tastes are not the consolations of meditative prayer : "What I now speak of as divine tastes, and *what I have elsewhere called the prayer of quiet*, is quite different."[1] Thus, according to her, those who have reached this degree of perfection receive the prayer of quiet. Moreover, St. Teresa, when she speaks of the different forms of the interior life, hardly speaks of anything else than the different kinds of supernatural prayer. "To speak of the fourth Mansion, I feel deeply the need of commending myself to the Holy Ghost. . . . Since we are *now to treat of supernatural states*, I need a very special help from God to make you understand them."[2]

The general conception of the work being such as is above described, there is no reason to be surprised if the passages, in which the saint repeats that different kinds of supernatural prayer are within the reach of all who are of good-will, are almost innumerable. Still, we will only cite a few.

[1] *The Interior Castle*, Fourth Mansion, ch. ii.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. i.

After describing supernatural recollection, she adds :

"Unless I am mistaken, God only grants such a grace as this to those who have renounced the world, if not in reality owing to being hindered by their state of life, at any rate in desire: He then calls them in a more special manner to give themselves up to the interior life. Of this I am convinced, provided that such souls as God begins to call to a higher state allow Him to act within them, He will not only grant them this favour but greater ones still."[1]

She had said the same thing, three pages before, with regard to the prayer of quiet: "If a soul is humble and detached from everything, and that in truth, and not in imagination which often misleads, then the divine Master, I doubt not, will not only grant it this grace, but many others that will surpass its desires."[2]

Further on,[3] she says that most of her daughters enter into the fifth Mansion, of which the prayer of union is the characteristic. Finally, on the last page of the last chapter of the book, she says: "God has a great love of humility ; with this virtue you will soon win His heart. He will hasten to receive you into the fifth Mansion, if He sees that you think yourselves unworthy to enter into the third. And if you are faithful, if you redouble your

[1] *The Interior Castle*, Fourth Mansion, ch. iii.
[2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*, Fifth Mansion, ch. i.

efforts to please Him, He will at last admit you into the Mansion in which He dwells Himself."[1]

As all these last quotations clearly show, God not only desires to raise souls to the great favour of the prayer of recollection or of quiet, but to the highest summits of prayer. St. Teresa had before written in her *Life*, in speaking of the prayer of quiet :

" Many souls reach this state ; but those who go beyond it are few, and I know not where to lay the blame for this. *Most surely not upon God.* As for Him, after He has granted so high a favour, He ceases not, in my opinion, to lavish fresh ones, unless our infidelity stops their flow."[2]

In the *Interior Castle*, after strongly recommending charity, she adds : " If you observe it perfectly, you will obtain, without doubt, the precious union of which I have spoken."[3]

Thus, it is not only once by the way, but constantly and in all her books and so to speak on every page that St. Teresa promises the grace of supernatural contemplation to all who will prepare for it by the sacrifices and

[1] *The Interior Castle*, Seventh Mansion, ch. iv.
[2] *Life*, ch. xv. [3] Fifth Mansion, ch. iii.

virtues which it presupposes. Moreover, such is her real mind, and this is being more and more recognized. Here is an interesting note on the subject by Father Arintero, O.P., now professor in the Roman College of St. Angelo, in a work published at Salamanca in 1908, entitled *Mystical Evolution*:[1]

"As these pages are going to press," he says, "we are very pleased to see that quite lately in the review, *Razon y Fé*,[2] Father Garate,[3] after quoting many passages from St. Teresa and explaining away apparent contradictions in them, draws from them this important conclusion: 'All who give themselves up to the holy exercise of intercourse with God have graces of congruity to reach the perfection of the mystical state.' Should it happen that anyone who had done his best did not succeed, it would be owing to some exceptional intervention of Providence, such as the saint calls the most secret judgements of God, and be 'a sort of derogation of the laws of mysticism.' And because this derogation is possible, she stirs up and encourages those religious who have not yet obtained the gift. . . . Father Garate adds: 'St. Teresa's doctrine seems to be that the graces of the mystical state are the ordinary mode made use of by the Lord to lead souls on to holiness, or, in other words, that contemplation is morally necessary to acquire holiness.'"

I firmly believe that these conclusions will seem more and more indisputable to all who

[1] Fr. Arintero, *Lá Évolución mística*, p. 636, note 1.

[2] A Review published by the Jesuits of Spain, July, 1908, p. 318.

[3] Fr. Garate expressly rejects Fr. de Maumigny's contrary interpretation.

read St. Teresa's works with an unbiassed mind and with sufficient care.

§ 5.—The opinion of St. Francis of Sales: contemplation is the goal towards which all spiritual exercises tend.

St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross were continually in touch with one another. St. John of the Cross and St. Francis of Sales had no immediate influence upon one another; the works of St. John of the Cross were written before the *Treatise of the Love of God*, but were only published afterwards. But St. Francis of Sales read the works of St. Teresa very carefully; he follows them and explains them with the greatest care; and he speaks of the saint with high admiration: "Blessed Mother Teresa of Jesus has so well written about the holy motions of charity in all the books she has left behind her that one is delighted to see such eloquence united to such great humility, and such strength of mind combined with such great simplicity; and her most learned nescience gives an appearance of great illiteracy to the science of many men of education who, after a great pother of scholarship, are ashamed not to understand what she has so happily written about

the practice of holy love."[1] Hence, the teaching of the great Doctor, now to be set forth, may be considered as an authoritative commentary on the writings of St. Teresa.

The doctrine of St. Francis of Sales is as clear as possible. He, too, says that beginners must rise to love by meditation; and then, when they are kindled with love, they will be ready for contemplation. All goes to prove this, both the general plan of what he has written and also his plainest affirmations.

Read through one after the other his *Introduction to a Devout Life* and his *Treatise of the Love of God.* In the former will be found half a Book, the second, devoted to meditation, but nothing that touches upon contemplation; in the latter, on the other hand, there are two whole Books devoted to contemplation, only one chapter dealing with meditation by way of reminder. And why is this? It is because the former work is an introduction to the latter. The first, as the title shows, is meant to lead up to devotion; the second is composed to "help a soul, which is already devout, to advance on its path . . .; I am speaking to souls which have made progress in devotion."[2] He is speak-

[1] From the Preface of the *Treatise of the Love of God.*
[2] The Preface.

ing, as he also says, to the Congregation of the Visitation ; and the instructions he gave them are the substance of what he has compiled into a book.

The entire outline of the book is quite unintelligible, unless it be admitted that the unitive life and the contemplative life are always combined together. "The four first Books, and a few chapters of the others, might no doubt be omitted," says he, "to suit those who are seeking for nothing else than the practice of holy dilection."[1] For that, in fact, is the point where begins the study of the acts of love, and of the life of love, or the unitive life. "There are two principal exercises of our love towards God ; the one, affective, and the other, effective."[2] He makes a study of affective love in the fifth Book ; in the sixth and the seventh, he deals with inward prayer, or the kinds of contemplative prayer ; in the eighth, he begins his study of effective love, which he continues in the ninth. Why does he intercalate a treatise on contemplation in this fashion in two Books between the Book on affective love and those dealing with effective love ? Because he identifies affective love with

[1] The Preface.
[2] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. i.

interior prayer, and to treat of such prayer is also to treat of affective love. "The exercise of affective love principally consists of prayer."[1] This is why he entitles the sixth Book: "On the exercises of holy love in prayer." Since mystical theology is nothing else than an experimental knowledge of God acquired through the practice of holy love, the holy writer may well identify mystical theology with prayer. This is what he does in the heading of the first chapter of the sixth Book: "A description of mystical theology, which is nothing but mental prayer." Here he uses *prayer* in the general sense in which "it comprises all contemplative acts."[2] What a number of surprising identifications! the exercise of affective love, prayer, mystical theology, and contemplation! He sums up the whole of this teaching in the following definition: "In fine, interior prayer and mystical theology are nothing else than a conversation in which the soul exercises loving intercourse with God as to His most amiable loving-kindness in order to unite therewith." Contemplation being "a loving attention to God," as he says in the third chapter, one can easily understand how it is confused with mystical theology. It is true

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. i. [2] *Ibid.*

that St. Francis of Sales in the second chapter of the sixth Book treats "of meditation, or the first degree of mystical theology," but meditation only belongs indirectly to mystical theology, so far as it prepares the way for love.

All these declarations, which are rather surprising to anyone who is not accustomed to the mind of St. Francis of Sales, become strikingly clear and simple as soon as one takes his doctrine as to contemplation, and as to its nature and origin, for granted. Here it is in a few very definite words:

"Contemplation is nothing else than a loving, simple, and permanent setting of the mind to attend to things divine, and this you will easily understand by comparing meditation with it.—The young bees are called pupæ until they can make honey, and then they are called bees. *Thus interior prayer is called meditation until it has produced the honey of devotion: after that it becomes contemplation.*"[1]

How could clearer terms be found to show that the interior prayer of those who are filled with love or devotion, which are the same thing to St. Francis of Sales, is contemplation? *The desire to obtain love*, he adds, *makes us meditate, but love once obtained makes us contemplate.*[2] And once more:

"At the outset we consider the goodness of God to stir up our will to love; but when love is formed in our hearts,

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. iii. [2] *Ibid.*

we consider the same goodness to satisfy our love, which is never sated with seeing enough of what it loves. *And in fine, meditation is the mother of love, but contemplation is its daughter.* This is why I have called contemplation a loving attention. . . . It is true that contemplation *crowns its father, love*, with perfection and with the fulness of all kinds of excellence. For love first stirs us to *contemplative attention*, and then this attention reciprocally brings into play a greater and more fervent love. . . ."[1]

Thus, until devotion begins to rule in the soul, meditation is made use of, as well as many other spiritual exercises, for its development; but when it rules, it casts the soul into a state of contemplation. "But seeing that, *to attain to contemplation*, we usually require to hear holy preaching, to make ourselves maxims and to enter into spiritual converse with others like the anchorites of old, to read books of devotion, to pray, to meditate, to sing hymns, and to think good thoughts, and *because holy contemplation is the end and aim to which all these exercises tend, they are all reduced thereto.*"[2] How few there are who think thus!

From the fact that contemplation is "a loving attention, that is to say, a love that makes us attend, or an attention arising from love,"[3] it must not be inferred that, especially at the outset, we can contemplate at will. "The

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. iii.
[2] *Ibid.*, Book VI, ch. vi. [3] *Ibid.*

loving recollection of the soul in contemplation . . . is not brought about by the command of love, *but by love itself:* that is to say, we do it not of our own choice, seeing that it is not in our power to have it at will, and it does not depend on our endeavour ; but God works it in us when He pleases to do so by His most holy grace."[1] And thus it is *a fortiori* in the case of all the higher forms of contemplative prayer which the holy Doctor studies in succession, somewhat like St. Teresa and often following in her steps, *e.g.*, quiet, the slumber of the powers, union, ecstasy. . . . But the beautiful *Treatise of the Love of God* is in everyone's hands : hence there is no need to add any more to an exposition which is already too lengthy.

§ 6. — A distinction that cannot be admitted between acquired and infused contemplation.[2]

I think the mind of these chosen masters has now been sufficiently brought out. Contemplation is the goal towards which spiritual life tends. Meditation, other spiritual exercises, and the practice of the virtues lead

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. vii.
[2] See Appendix, p. 196.

generous souls on to it. This preparation is required as a general rule. But if it be faithfully made, God, unless some quite exceptional purpose intervene, will never fail at the proper time to grant special graces enabling one to contemplate. And this is why truly perfect souls are usually contemplative.

This exposition has been carried out without paying any attention to a distinction which is sometimes made between *acquired* or active contemplation, and infused or passive contemplation to which the epithet *mystical* is restricted.

We have taken this line for many reasons. First, the distinction was never dreamt of by the great masters whose doctrine has been expounded. Further, there is no place for it in their system. After methodical prayer of a discursive and affective character, does not St. Teresa rank those kinds of prayer which she calls supernatural, that is to say passive, the prayer of recollection and of quiet, of the slumber of the powers, of union, and of ecstasy? What division does she make between the *consolations* of meditation and the *divine tastes* of quiet? She goes much further, she excludes quite definitely any intermediate kind of prayer. After giving a descrip-

tion of affective prayer which may be read in her *Life*, she adds: "It is the kind of prayer with which all must begin, continue, and *end;* until it please the Lord to raise them to supernatural states."

St. Francis of Sales prescribes meditation until love is formed in the soul; then love makes souls contemplate, but only when grace is present or under the special influence of the Holy Ghost. Where can anyone find a place for acquired contemplation?

According to St. John of the Cross, in his *Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza XXVII, "mystical theology is contemplation."

For all souls, contemplation is a "loving attention to God" brought about by the influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, that is to say, passively. How can this definition be duplicated into passive and active? This, too, is a thing no one has been able to do intelligibly.[1]

What misleads people is that they want to find absolute passivity everywhere. This is a misunderstanding of the doctrine of St. Teresa. Take the following instance. In her *Life*, does she not base the distinction between the different kinds of supernatural prayer on the greater or less amount of passivity they display? In the

[1] See Appendix, p. 196.

state of quiet, the soul is manifestly assisted, as in the case of a gardener who draws water from a *noria*;[1] in the slumber of the powers, like someone who waters with pipes; but, as soon as union with God takes place, it is He who does all, and the soul has nothing more to do than a gardener when his garden is watered with the rain.

Hence, contemplation is always a passive kind of prayer, at the outset only slightly passive, when God impresses the sense of His presence on the soul merely momentarily; and then, much more passive, when He attaches and unites it to Himself so that it forgets everything else; and still more so, when He attracts it so strongly as to tear it away from its sense-perceptions. But in all these cases, contemplation remains substantially the same.

§ 7.—The doctrine verified by facts.

I should have been pleased to summon all the sacred writers to give their testimony on behalf of this doctrine. But it is impossible to do this in a brief essay, and what would be the good of doing so? Who will doubt that our great mystical teachers faithfully re-echo

[2] A *noria* is a draw-well.

tradition ? Moreover, the work has been done in the Abbé Saudreau's excellent book, *The Life of Union with God.*

So far as it can be done, I would rather verify our doctrine in a sort of experimental way, and ascertain whether in the accounts of the saints graces of contemplation really run parallel with sanctity. It is easy to understand that this is a subtle experiment to attempt: we shall also confine ourselves to such as will thoroughly pass muster.

If we would have indisputable examples of the highest sanctity, we must go to the great Christians who have been beatified or canonized by the Church, though they were not martyrs. Were all of them contemplatives ? Yes ; all those whose history is known possessed mystical gifts to such a high degree that they burst forth in spite of them, however much care they took to dissimulate them, and this has been capable of historical proof. Fourteen notable saints of the Society of Jesus, either beatified or canonized, were all of them great contemplatives. Some exceptions were put forward, but these cases were disallowed after it had been proved that they were no exceptions. On this question, see Father Poulain's *Grâces d'oraison*, chapter xxviii. The list of

historical facts which he gives is all the more striking, because in theory his ideas are very different from those I have put forward.

From the fact that all the cases which fall beneath our observation, and they are very numerous, are identical in their testimony, do we not legitimately infer by induction that this is the general rule: All the great saints are great contemplatives? Furthermore, if their inner history be closely studied, it will be found that they first of all passed through the lower degrees of contemplation to rise step by step as their virtue increased. In them is verified the rule thus formulated by St. John of the Cross: "Mystical union is very slowly fulfilled by insensible degrees and in proportion as the soul grows in perfection. . . . It is determined by one's spiritual progress."[1] The lives of the saints prove, therefore, that the state of a soul's interior prayer corresponds with its degree of virtue, or, according to a passage of Cassian's writings, "each soul rises in prayer in proportion to its purity."[2]

Cannot other sure experimental proofs of the latter affirmation be adduced? St. Teresa

[1] *A Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza XXIII.
[2] Tenth *Conf.*, ch. v.

and St. Jeanne de Chantal shall provide them. For the proof from experience to be a good one, we must discover an environment in which sanctity has indisputably begun or exists in an intermediate stage, and in which there are no very great impediments to contemplation owing to mistaken spiritual direction or other causes; and then we must have someone well versed in the ways of mysticism, knowing all that can be known about them, to tell us what the various states of prayer are in such conditions. The communities of St. Teresa provide us with an almost ideal medium, and the saint is herself the best of observers. Now, about ten or twelve years after the founding of her work, she writes: "I have just spoken of the graces which our Lord scatters through our monasteries; these graces are so great that in each separate house you will scarcely find a single religious whom the divine Master is leading by the way of ordinary meditation. All the rest are raised to the state of perfect contemplation. Some of the more advanced are favoured with ecstasies."[1] A few years later, in the *Interior Castle*, she repeats: "Some of Thy servants (O Lord) habitually enjoy heavenly delights (*i.e.* the prayer of union)

[1] *The Book of the Foundations*, ch. iv.

. . . I say 'some,' yet there are very few who do not enter into the fifth Mansion. And as their numbers vary, I may affirm that the majority of them do so enter in. . . ."[1]

In another medium, of about the same sanctity and favoured to the same extent, the Visitation convents under the direction of St. Jeanne de Chantal and of St. Francis of Sales, the same facts are observable.

"I must now say simply," says St. Jeanne,[2] "what I kept silence about for good reasons, though the need of souls now forces me to declare it frankly: the further I go the more plainly do I recognize that our Lord leads almost all the daughters of the Visitation to interior prayer, realizing the divine presence in the simplest unity and in the most unique simplicity by an entire yielding of themselves up to His holy will and to the care of divine Providence. . . . I know that this sort of interior prayer is much opposed by those whom God leads by way of discursive prayer, and several of our sisters have been upset by being told that they were lazy and wasting their time; but without withholding any of the re-

[1] Fifth Mansion, ch. i.

[2] St. Jeanne de Chantal, *Réponses sur le Coutumier de la Visitation.*

spect I owe to such people, I assure you, my dear sisters, that you ought not to allow yourselves to be turned aside by such remarks," etc.

In another letter to the Superior of a convent, we read: "The almost universal attraction of the daughters of the Visitation is towards a very simple sense of the presence of God and to entire self-surrender. . . . And I might very well omit the word 'almost,' for really I have remarked that all who from the outset are as diligent in mental prayer as they should be feel this attraction from the beginning." This is the kind of prayer which St. Francis of Sales taught them in his addresses and letters, as he says in the preface of his *Treatise of the Love of God.*

These examples are most eloquent, and they may reassure one as against the allegations of men whose experience is more or less a subject for caution, and who assert they have never observed anything of the kind. Father Surin, too, was an experienced man, a man of genuine experience. And this is what he writes :[1] "I can give you an assurance that, amongst all the persons whom I have seen make a full

[1] *Spiritual Dialogues,* Vol. I, Book IV, ch. ii.

surrender of themselves to God, I have observed none who was not favoured with this gift (contemplation), after having had a certain amount of practice in meditation on the mysteries and truths of the faith." St. Francis of Sales and St. John of the Cross were also men of experience, and they knew that their teaching was in conformity with fact.

Let us then unhesitatingly draw our conclusion : Contemplation is the normal goal of the spiritual life ; souls who are eager for perfection have a right to try to secure it, and their spiritual directors should prepare them for it.

CHAPTER III

THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF CONTEMPLATIVES

Summary.—§ 1. The preparation for contemplation. i. Renunciation. ii. Recollection.—§ 2. The commencement of contemplation.—§ 3. The conduct of the contemplative outside of contemplation. i. in prayer. ii. apart from prayer.—§ 4. The conduct of the contemplative in the act of contemplation. His activity in passive prayer. Its rules: i. loving attention. The reason of this rule. ii. detachment from everything else, especially from extraordinary graces.—Conclusion.

In this brief chapter one can only give a very general line to be followed in the direction of contemplatives. Yet I wish at any rate, as a consequence of the broad questions already raised, to lay down certain main principles of conduct which will be useful in throwing light upon particular cases. I shall continue the method I have so far pursued, that is to say, I shall borrow my ideas very faithfully from the usual masters.

§ 1.—The preparation for contemplation.

Let us begin with a reminder of the conclusions we came to in our last chapter. Contemplation is an end, or rather it is *the purpose* of the spiritual life. One can prepare for it. This preparation, moreover, is ordinarily an indispensable condition of its attainment.

In what does this preparation consist? In fine, it consists in doing all that ascetical authors recommend. Whether they expressly propose to lead souls on to contemplation, or do not think about it, they proceed much in the same way at the outset. The only difference is, that in the latter case, neither the soul knows whither it is going, nor does its director know whither he is guiding it, and they both lack the powerful encouragement which is derived from the perception of a clearly seen ideal. Further, when the goal is reached, it is not recognized, and a great deal of strength is wasted in constantly trying to find it.

Next, if we had to describe the preparation to be undergone by the soul for contemplation, a whole treatise on asceticism would be needed, and we shall refrain from such an undertaking.

Let us be satisfied to sum up everything under two heads:—To facilitate contemplation two things are needed: (1) to be detached from all creatures; (2) to become as attached as possible to God. General renunciation on the one hand, and recollection in God on the other, this, if one may venture so to express oneself, is the whole of our programme.

i. *Renunciation.*—It is not difficult to show the necessity of renunciation. Contemplation consists essentially, as I have said, in "a loving attention to God," in "tastes of God" to use the words of St. Teresa. But if the soul is to become thus attached and joined with all its strength to God, it must not be withheld in other directions; if the heart is not to lead astray the mind with the memory of other things it must put its treasure in one place only. As long as our passions, our intellectual or moral interests, are too strong, as long as we have other attachments, they will make us act, they will attract us to things created and draw us away from God. We shall only recollect ourselves with difficulty. We have to win the possibility of doing this every day by getting rid of the causes of vain and futile impulses. But what is our position? If we

talk of literature or history we shall find some ready to listen ; if we speak of entomology or hunting, others will be interested ; but if we speak of God, hardly a heart will thrill. The whole of our life is madly absorbed in idle dreams, because we are so easily affected in so many ways. Yet we ought to be dead to everything, and open only to the things of God. "The world and God are two opposites," said St. John of the Cross, and St. Teresa regards it as one of her most fatal illusions that she "endeavoured to lead a life of prayer and to live according to her own good pleasure at the same time." Hence, there must be complete renunciation. This work is a thing to be done ; we have to make a start on it ; and this is what St. John of the Cross calls the active purification of the soul, a purification which he describes throughout a considerable part of his *Ascent of Mount Carmel.* God will do the rest by His grace.[1]

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Obscure Night of the Soul* are the principal works of St. John of the Cross. In reality, they are only one. The author only keeps back for the second certain special points which he might have dealt with in the first.

These books treat of the progress of the soul in the interior life, and of its ascent in contemplation. This ascent is a night for three reasons : the *void* in which it sets the soul by disengaging it from all that is external ;

ii. *Recollection.*—The soul is only detached from creatures to become attached to God. We

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the *means* which it uses to go to God, viz., faith, a means which is essentially obscure; the goal it attains, that is to say God, who is hidden from us in this life.

This night has two principal parts: in the first, the night of the senses, the soul frees itself from the sensible, from the passions, and from the complex operations of the reason and the imagination. It gives itself up to pure contemplation, or the intuition of faith. But the crisis is a terrible one.—Then contemplation increases, and it becomes far more delightful than the state which preceded the night. The senses still have some part in one's contemplation, which is not purely spiritual, though it will become so more and more. Let the will keep the understanding free from all mental images; then infused contemplation will do the rest. It will engulf the senses in the darkest of nights; then, becoming more and more spiritual, it will at last be scarcely perceptible itself. Then occurs the anguish of the spiritual night. But it will increase love, which will finally enkindle in the soul a light that is entirely spiritual.

Two agents concur in this transformation, man and God, free will and infused contemplation. Active purification is the name given to the use of one's free will in preventing any impediment being put in the way of God's action, and in rather favouring such action to the full, to purify the soul actively in the two nights: this is the subject of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel.* The reaction of infused contemplation on the soul which is given up to it, inevitable reactions which result in the two nights, the properties, characteristics, and effects of these nights with all the anguish of the poor soul which finds itself plunged therein, such is the subject of the *Obscure Night of the Soul.*

The *Spiritual Canticle* treats of the same subject in a less didactic form. The *Living Flame of Love* gives a description of the state of Spiritual Marriage; but, in a digression on the third Stanza, the writer gives what is really a short epitome on the spiritual direction of contemplatives.

shall get at last to love God like a mother, like a particular friend whose name sends a thrill through our heart. But for this to come to pass, we have first of all *to frequent and to get to know God* very carefully. This is done by spiritual reading, reflections and meditations, by vocal prayers, by short and frequently repeated acts of love, such as are called ejaculatory, means which according to tradition belong *dispositive* to contemplation. Then, according to the saying already quoted from St. Francis of Sales, "when meditation has produced the honey of devotion, it changes into contemplation."

§ 2. — The commencement of contemplation.

"When can the spiritual man begin to contemplate?" This question is raised and answered by St. John of the Cross in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel.*[1] He deals with it again in the *Obscure Night of the Soul;*[2] and here and there in the *Living Flame of Love.*[3] These are classic passages on the subject, and they must certainly be read. They might well be

[1] Book II, chapters xiii to xv.
[2] Book I, chapters ix and x.
[3] Stanza III, line iii, §§ 4-12.

transcribed here, but I shall only sum them up very briefly.

First, observe that one does not contemplate at will, but when it pleases God. That is abundantly clear from the passages already quoted. St. Teresa constantly repeats that "one cannot force oneself" into contemplation. The comparison of the tortoise and the hedgehog reminds us of this. St. Francis of Sales speaks in the same way as St. Teresa. Let us also recall this passage, amongst many others, of St. John of the Cross.

"For as it is necessary to abstain from it (meditation) at the proper time, in order to draw near unto God, that we may not be hindered by it; *so also must we not cease from it before the time*, lest we go backwards: for though all that the powers of the soul may apprehend cannot be proximate means of union for those who have made some spiritual progress, still they serve, as remote means, to dispose and habituate the minds of beginners to that which is spiritual by means of the senses, and to clear the way of all other low forms and images, temporal, worldly, and natural."[1]

But how is "the time willed by the Spirit of God" to be known? Doth not the Spirit blow where He wills, and when He wills? Nevertheless, it is no less true that God never denies His help to us when we are ready for it in those things for which He wishes us to

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. xiii. L. T. I, p. 101.

prepare. Moreover, the masters of the spiritual life recognize in certain dispositions, which they call signs, God's call to the soul. These signs are three in number. This is the way they are set forth in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel:*

"1. When a man cannot meditate nor exert his imagination nor derive any satisfaction from it, as he was wont to do. . . .

2. When he sees that he has no inclination to fix the imagination or the senses on particular objects, exterior or interior. . . .

3. The third sign is the most certain of the three, namely, when the soul delights to be alone, waiting lovingly on God. . . ."[1]

The last sign is thus described in the *Obscure Night of the Soul:* "The memory dwells ordinarily upon God with a painful anxiety and carefulness."[2]

In many chapters St. John of the Cross proves that the soul should now resolutely leave off discursive meditation. And almost all writers reproduce his teaching with a few comments. The best thing to do is to read the saint's own words.

At this time, meditation and all the other exercises have attained their end. Meditation is meant to enable us thoroughly to consider the motives for loving and to train the will to love.

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. xiii. L. T. I, p. 102.

[2] *Ibid.*, Book I, ch. ix. L. T. I, p. 349.

When it has had its due effect, love is born. The goal has been reached, and the journey has not to be begun afresh. And this is why one can meditate no longer. It is not a question of being unable to make any reflections, but of an entire absence of any use or interest in making them for the sake of loving.

The third rule is correlative to the first. One cannot meditate because one wishes to love. Because the name of God has inflicted its wound upon the soul the name recurs to it incessantly, and the soul constantly turns towards Him in anxiety. It is in anxiety, because it is wounded by love, and yet does not at present feel this love. "At first it is not conscious of any spiritual sweetness and delight, but rather of aridities and distaste, because of the novelty of the change . . . (this) interior food is the commencement of Contemplation, dry and obscure to the senses. This contemplation is in general secret and unknown to him who is admitted into it."[1]

As to the second sign :—that the incapacity for meditation does not arise from any weakness of nature or of health,—it is even a surer guarantee than the two others.

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book I, ch. ix. L. T. I, pp. 350, 351.

This period of transition, when souls are at the commencement of the contemplative way, is one of the most important and difficult moments of spiritual direction. It is the first of the two nights of which St. John of the Cross speaks. But when some light has been shed upon this condition, when a soul has become certain, either of itself, or with the help of its director, that it has begun to receive the graces of contemplation, what steps has it then to take? To answer this question one must first of all bear in mind that these contemplative dispositions or the first effects of contemplation are not a state which is acquired so as to abide for ever, nor a state that is always present. No; the soul at first contemplates but rarely, then more often, then habitually, and never reaches a state that is so steadfast as not to fall back into that which preceded it. Therefore the contemplative must be considered apart from contemplation, and then in the very act of contemplation.

§ 3.—The conduct of the contemplative outside of contemplation.

i. *First of all in prayer*, when he cannot contemplate, what is to be done by the person

who has commenced the contemplative way? This is the answer of St. John of the Cross:

"Here it may be asked, whether proficients, those whom God has begun to lead into this supernatural knowledge of contemplation, are, in virtue of this commencement, never again *to return to the way of meditation*, reflections, and natural forms? To this I answer, *that it is not to be supposed that those who have begun to have this pure and loving knowledge are never to meditate again* or to attempt it. For *in the beginning of their advancement the habit of this is not so perfect as that they should be able at pleasure to perform the acts of it.* Neither are they so advanced beyond the state of meditation as to be unable to meditate and make their reflections as before, and to find therein something new. Yea, rather, at first, when we see, by the help of these signs, that our soul is not occupied in this quiet, or knowledge, it will be necessary to have recourse to reflections, *until we attain to the habit of it in some perfection.* Such will be the case when, as often as we apply ourselves to meditation, the soul reposes in this peaceful knowledge, without the power or the inclination to meditate; because, until we arrive at this, sometimes one, sometimes the other, occurs in this time of proficiency in such a way that very often the soul finds itself in a loving or peaceful attendance upon God, with all its faculties in repose; and *very often also it will be necessary, for that end, to have recourse to meditation, calmly and with moderation.* But when this state is attained to, meditation ceases, and the faculties labour no more. . . ."[1]

In the *Obscure Night of the Soul* we find the same teaching. After saying that meditation must be given up when the contemplative

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. xv. L. T. I, pp. 112, 113.

dispositions make their appearance, St. John of the Cross adds :

"Still, I do not mean to lay down a general rule for the cessation from meditation ; that should occur when meditation is no longer feasible, and only then, when our Lord, either in the way of purgation and affliction, or of the most perfect contemplation, shall make it impossible. At other times, and on other occasions, *this support must be had recourse to, namely, meditation* on the life and Passion of Christ. . . ."[1]

This important teaching cannot be too much insisted on. On this point St. Teresa is perhaps even more explicit and absolute than St. John of the Cross. Take, for instance, the following :

". . . This consideration of the knowledge of oneself must never be abandoned ; doubtless there is no one, even though a giant in the spiritual life, who ought not often to return to the state of an infant at the breast. Let this counsel never be forgotten ; I shall perhaps repeat it more than once, so important is it ; for there is no state of prayer so high that it will not often be necessary to revert to the beginning."[2]

"Now we can see what a state of peace would be enjoyed by the gardener, if the Lord were to pour out this water whenever it was wanted. . . . But as long as we live, that is impossible. We must always be on the watch and set to work whenever the water runs dry, so as to replace it with a fresh supply."[3]

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[1] *The Obscure Night*, Book I, ch. x. L. T. I, p. 356.
[2] *Life*, ch. xiii.
[3] *Ibid.*, ch. xviii.

Or read the following from the *Interior Castle:* we only curtail it with regret:

"There are souls,—as several of them have confided to me,—who, after having been raised to a state of perfect contemplation, desire ever to abide in it, a thing which is impossible. . . . The soul yearns *to do nothing else but love*, and to think of nothing besides this; but its efforts will be in vain, for this is not in its power. And this is why: although its will is not dead, the fire which usually inflames it is deadened; someone must blow upon it if it is to give any more heat. But, when the soul is in this state of aridity, must it wait for the fire to fall from heaven to consume the soul's sacrifice to God as it consumed that of our Father Elias? Assuredly, no. We must not look for miracles. . . . Of a truth, those whom God introduces into the seventh Mansion very rarely need to make reflections. . . . Furthermore, I repeat it, when the fire with which the will is usually inflamed is not alight, and one feels not the divine presence, it must be sought in the manner of the Bride in the *Canticle of Canticles*, and, in the same way as St. Augustine in his *Meditations*, I think, or in his *Confessions*, we must ask creatures to give Him to us who was their Maker. Hence, let us not stand still in stupidity and lose our time in waiting for the perfect contemplation to which He once condescended to raise us; for, in the beginning, perhaps a year will pass, or even several years, before He grants us this favour again."[1]

"We must ever be on the watch," says St. Teresa. How true a word is this! There is never a time in which contemplation takes place all of its own accord. It is a "loving expectation," and the word "expectation" or "attention" implies voluntary endeavour.

[1] *The Interior Castle*, Sixth Mansion, ch. vii.

Should anyone attain to the spiritual marriage, and then give up all endeavour—a thing which could scarcely occur, according to St. John of the Cross—he would run to seed and lose his powers of recollection and contemplation. It is true that the attention required is sometimes very easily exercised: some thought of the faith is enough; and when this thought is directed to God, it so attaches the soul to Him that very freely, but more and more, it is absorbed in a state of contemplation which is full of love. It is for such as have reached this degree that meditation is almost always useless.

At a lower stage of perfection one is often drawn away from God, and the heart still gets caught by false baits; when the divine Friend is present, one fails to recognize Him, or feels the attraction of other tastes than "those of God." Then, sometimes, a certain amount of time is required to get rid of the poison. Nevertheless, there is still no need to go a long way in search of means for union with God. It is often enough to make a few acts of the theological virtues, which are strictly speaking unitive. This is the method prescribed by St. John of the Cross. Another method, put forth by St. Teresa in the *Way of Perfection*,

is in reality the same: this is the recitation of the *Pater noster*, the first part of which is merely an act of love. It is also a capital expedient to remember some very special goodness in one of God's dealings with us: for this is more touching, and makes recollection all the readier. And if none of these means is successful, one must make use of considerations which are perhaps more remote from one's purpose, but which, at times, alone are able to touch the heart.

St. Teresa strongly advises one to carry with one a book of devotion. She always did this herself, at any rate during the first twenty years of her life of prayer. Without a book she felt as if she were lost and could do nothing; the book reassured her; and after reading a few lines or pages, sometimes merely on opening it or in thinking it was there, she became recollected in God.[1] But of course it is important that the book should be well chosen so as to lead one readily to God.

ii. *Apart from the time of prayer*, the contemplative should facilitate recollection in every possible way. What has been already said as to spiritual reading, good examples,

[1] *Life*, chapters iv and ix.

meditations, the reception of the sacraments, and vocal prayers to prepare the soul for the love of God, holds good all through life in every stage of contemplation for the increase of such love. Methodical meditation often becomes impossible. But all the knowledge one can obtain by any means whatever, reading, spoken instruction, the Church's worship or honour of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, or the Saints, are excellent and most useful, a block of wood thrown on the fire of love. Hence, we ought to get great profit from the mysteries of Christianity. And this is insisted upon by St. Teresa in her *Interior Castle*.[1]

To live in holy company, in supernatural occupations, increases piety in the soul. Often some noble example, a look, an inspiring word, will stir a saint to some sudden and deep state of recollection, which seizes upon him unexpectedly and without his being able to account for it. St. Catherine of Genoa was once present at an exorcism, and was so upset, on hearing the devil call himself *Him who loveth not*, by the thought of losing all love that she fell into a long ecstasy.[2]

[1] Sixth Mansion, ch. vii.

[2] There is no need to insist once more on the necessity of practising all the virtues.

§ 4.—The conduct of the contemplative in the act of contemplation.

Freedom in contemplation.—Contemplation is a kind of passive prayer. Hence it might be supposed that there was no advice to be given to a contemplative in the very act of contemplation. But it is a mistake to think of the passivity as something complete. Man is, according to St. Thomas, "an instrument of the Holy Ghost," yet an instrument which *libere sequitur*. Hence he keeps both his consciousness and his freedom for a certain co-operation with the action of the Holy Ghost at the outset when God's working is ordinarily weaker, for a meritorious acquiescence later on in prayers in which he is totally surrendered to the power of grace and cannot even understand what is going on within him.

A proof of man's activity in contemplation is that St. John of the Cross devotes his second and third Books of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* to the explanation of the way this activity is to be regulated. All the ascetical writers are full of counsels on the same subject.

St. Teresa feels the need of contending with such ignorance on the point as may be met with. With regard to ecstasies, even those which are

miraculous and accompanied with levitation, she writes: "At first, I admit, I was seized with an excess of fear, when I saw my body thus raised above the earth. For although the soul carries it away with it in ineffable delight when it does not offer any resistance, *one does not lose one's consciousness of it;* at any rate, in my own case, I so far retained it that I could see that I was raised above the ground."[1] She was so well aware of it that once, in order to try to avoid the impatience with which it filled her, she tried to escape the favour by casting herself on the ground, as she relates in the same place. A little farther on, she adds: "If those who have to give spiritual direction have not experienced this, especially if they are wanting in knowledge, they may suppose that *in an ecstasy people must be as it were dead.* What such persons have to undergo at the hands of confessors who do not understand them is really enough to win them compassion."[2]

There are even distractions amidst ecstasies and raptures: "Let not him who has received so great a favour from God be troubled if he find his body as it were bound during a long time, and his memory and understanding sometimes distracted. Usually, in fact, the dis-

[1] *Life*, ch. xx. [2] *Ibid.*

tractions endured by these two faculties only consist in pouring out praise unto God with whom they are as it were inebriated, or in trying to understand what has taken place within them."[1]

Consciousness then remains. If it did not, how could saints remember their experiences? St. Teresa cannot approve of prayer in which one does nothing and remembers nothing. This, says she, is an infirmity. Indeed, there is always a certain amount of awareness of things external, enough to enable a contemplative to hear, for instance, the striking of a clock which shows the time of prayer is over.

Since persons retain their consciousness and even their free will in the most passive kind of prayer, how should they employ their activity? When the state of contemplation is undoubted, when God is acting upon the soul, when He attracts and absorbs it, and deprives it of the capacity or at any rate of the desire to make any methodical mental representations, at such moments, which are short and scarce at first, and then more habitual, and lastly more constant, with the divine action much more pronounced and certain, what is to be done? Two things: (1) to place oneself, to keep oneself,

[1] *Life*, ch. xx.

and sometimes to put oneself over again, in an attitude of loving expectancy towards God; (2) to abstain from anything else, being patiently, perhaps heroically, satisfied with doing that: "If you will be careful to lay no stress on your own operations, withdrawing them from all things, and involving them in nothing—which is your duty in your present state—and wait lovingly and sincerely upon God at the same time—doing no violence to yourselves except to detach yourselves wholly, so as not to disturb your tranquillity and peace—God Himself will feed you with heavenly food, since you cease to hinder Him."[1]

Let us now dwell a little upon these two points, beginning with loving expectation.

i. *Loving attention* or *loving expectation.*—This is contemplation in itself. Once more, it is God who works it, and we lend ourselves to His working. St. John of the Cross very clearly explains how we ought to surrender ourselves to the divine action in this simple attention, yet without putting any impediment

[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza III, line iii, § 15. L. T., pp. 286, 287. The French version gives the last clause thus: "and to secure the holy liberty of the children of God."

in the way of such action if at times it leads to other acts:

"To these my counsel is—*learn to abide with attention in loving waiting upon God in the state of quiet;* give no heed to your imagination, nor to its operations, for now, as I have said, the powers of the soul are at rest, and are not exercised, except in the sweet and pure waiting of love. If at times they are excited, *it is not violently, nor with meditation elaborately* prepared, but by the sweetness of love, *more under the influence of God than by the ability of the soul.*"[1]

This passage enables us easily to distinguish, at least in theory, between the affective outpourings of the contemplative state and what is called affective prayer. In the latter, even those affections which are sweet and consoling are the result of method or premeditation; in the contemplative state, they are a pure outpouring of the heart overflowing with the love of God.

Here is a beautiful passage from the *Living Flame of Love*, already quoted in another context, in which we find the same doctrine:

"Souls in this state are not to be forced to meditate, nor to apply themselves to discursive reflections laboriously effected, neither are they to strive after sweetness and fervour, for if they did so, *they would be thereby placing obstacles in the way of the principal agent, who is God Himself,* for He is now secretly and quietly infusing wisdom into the soul, together with the loving knowledge of Himself,

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Book II, ch. xii. L. T. I, p. 100.

independently of these divers acts, without their being multiplied or elicited, *though He produces them sometimes specifically in the soul, and that for some space of time.* And in that case, *the soul too must be lovingly intent upon God without specifically eliciting other acts beyond those to which He inclines it;* it must be as it were passive, making no efforts of its own, *purely, simply, and lovingly intent upon God,* as a man who opens his eyes with loving attention."[1]

Such is the rule. It is well to add thereto a remark made both by St. John of the Cross and by St. Francis of Sales: the vigilance thus recommended should be very gentle.

The former writes: "When this takes place, when the soul feels that it is silent and listens, its loving attention must be most pure, without a thought of self, in a manner self-forgotten, so that it shall be wholly intent upon hearing, for thus it is that the soul is free and ready for that which our Lord requires at its hands."[2]

And St. Francis of Sales puts forth the same thought:

". . . All such souls are usually very liable to be disturbed in prayer. For if God gives them the blessed repose of His presence, they readily leave it to see how they are therein and to find out whether they are pleased with it, worrying to know whether their tranquillity is really tranquil and their quietude really quiet. . . . The soul to whom God gives holy and loving quiet in prayer ought to abstain as much as possible from intro-

[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza III, line iii, § 6. L. T. II, pp. 268, 269.

[2] *Ibid.*, L. T. II, p. 270.

spection and from looking at its own state of repose to keep which it must not be looked at with curiosity, for he who is too fond of it loses it, and the just rule to go by is not to be so fond of it as to upset it. And just as a child who takes away his head from his mother's breast to see where he has put his feet is quick to turn back again, because he is very delicate, so must we, if we perceive that we are distracted by being curious about what we are doing in prayer, quickly restore our hearts to the gentle and peaceful attention to the presence of God from which we have been diverted."[1]

These simple rules are not so easy to practise, especially at first. What then takes place is something so calm, so delicate, that the soul dares not think it is doing enough for God, and that the spiritual director too often imagines that it is wasting its time in idleness or torpor of spirit. Moreover, the mystical masters like to take plenty of time in *fully explaining these rules* and in inspiring souls with confidence.

Let none be alarmed by the excessive simplicity of what takes place, says St. John of the Cross: "The general knowledge of which I am speaking, is at times so subtle and delicate—particularly when most pure, simple, perfect, spiritual, and interior—that the soul, *though in the practice thereof*, is not observant or conscious of it."[2]

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. x.
[2] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. xiv. L. T. I, p. 107.

However, says he, "when (this knowledge) is communicated to the will also, which is almost always the case in a greater or less degree, the soul cannot but see, if it will reflect thereon, that it is occupied by this knowledge; *because it is then conscious of the sweetness of love therein, without any particular knowledge or perception of what it loves.* This is the reason why this knowledge is called loving and general; for as it communicates itself obscurely to the intellect, so also to the will, infusing therein love and sweetness confusedly, without the soul's knowing distinctly the object of its love."[1]

Here let one fact, which is clearly brought out by the holy writer, be noted; it is this, that during contemplation there is in the intelligence no notion of any definite object; but one feels a sense of love. We shall refer to this in a subsequent chapter; we now only desire to give a warning as to a fact which is thought to be very surprising. It is this fact which has led theologians to ask if there could be such a thing as a love of which one was unconscious, and mystics to speak of the "great darkness." This is because contemplative prayer takes

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. xiv. L. T. I, p. 111.

place above all in the will with a purely implicit sense of the presence of God. "The will is alone what God wants," says St. Francis of Sales.[1] Hence here, too, there is nothing alarming.

Further, in spite of its extreme simplicity, this silent love produces much greater spiritual effects than the tumult of meditation. Listen to St. John of the Cross:

"Now, if they who are in this state knew how to be quiet, to disregard every interior and exterior work, the accomplishment of which they labour after, and to be without solicitude about everything but the resignation of themselves into the hands of God, and a loving interior obedience to His voice, they would have, in this tranquillity, a most delicious taste of interior refreshing. This refreshing is so delicate that, in general, it eludes our perceptions if we are in any degree anxious to feel it, for it works in the soul when most tranquil and free, and is like the air which vanishes whenever we shut our hands to grasp it."[2]

How this holy writer esteems these precious unctions of the Holy Ghost may be seen in the following from the *Living Flame of Love*:

"The least portion of the action of God on the soul in this state of holy rest and solitude is an inestimable good, transcending the very thought of the soul and of its spiritual guide, and though it does not appear so then, it will show itself in due time. What the soul feels in this

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[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VII, ch. ii.
[2] *The Obscure Night*, Book I, ch. ix. L. T. I, p. 351.

state is a certain estrangement and alienation from all things around it, sometimes more, sometimes less, with a certain sweet aspiration of love and life of the spirit, an inclination to solitude, and a sense of weariness in the things of this world, for when we taste the spirit, the flesh becomes insipid. *But the interior goods which silent contemplation impresses on the soul without the soul's consciousness of them, are of inestimable value*, for they are the most sweet and delicious unctions of the Holy Ghost, whereby He secretly fills the soul with the riches of His gifts and graces; for being God, He doeth the work of God as God."[1]

Moreover, how great an evil it is if souls are caused to lose them! Hear the same saint once more:

"It is as if a beautiful painting were roughly handled, besmeared with coarse and vile colours; for the injury done is greater, more observable, and more deplorable, than it would be if a multitude of common paintings were bedaubed. Though this evil be so great that it cannot be exaggerated, it is still so common that there is scarcely one spiritual director who does not inflict it upon souls whom God has begun to lead by this way of contemplation."[2]

To combine the authority of St. Francis of Sales with that of St. John of the Cross, I give the following passage only:

"When, therefore, you have such a simple and pure confidence in our Lord, abide therein, my dear Theotima, and do not make the least effort to produce sensible acts of the understanding or the will, for this simple confiding

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[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza III, line iii, § 7. L. T. II, p. 272.

[2] *Ibid.*, § 8. L. T., p. 273.

love and this loving slumber of your spirit in the Saviour's arms *includes par excellence* all you hunt after hither and thither in following your own likings."[1]

As for St. Teresa, in the *Interior Castle*, and especially in her *Life*, she describes at great length the marvellous effects of the least supernatural prayers of various kinds, using an exuberance of expressions which nevertheless she finds insufficient; she multiplies her superlatives and lavishes words of admiration without being able to utter all that she feels.

The authority of such great names as these offers the best of guarantees to spiritual directors. Furthermore, how can the excellence of contemplation fail to strike those who reflect? This finding of satisfaction in God, this complete adhesion of man's will to God, all this is the perfection of the life of man. It is what God most desires of us; such acts fill Him with joy, and glorify Him as far as He can be glorified by the creature. And these acts which are so pleasing to God from the fact of pleasing Him are the most meritorious: they are the acts which He will most fully reward.—Moreover, they are the most sanctifying, since they obtain for us most graces, whether habitual or actual.—Lastly, these acts increase

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. viii.

love most. Many other acts may stir one to love; by these, we do not prepare to love, we love; and that which increases love like any other virtue is just the exercise of love.—If these few thoughts are well reflected on, they will afford a canvas which is easy to fill in; they will certainly enable anyone to understand what a precious favour loving attention to God is, and how right the saints are in recommending those whom the Holy Ghost favours with it not to reject it in their endeavours to find something better.

ii. *Detachment from everything else.*—Entire detachment from everything else is the second rule, though quite negative in its scope, of the contemplative. There is not much to be said about it here.

The interests which might untowardly affect the soul are either natural or supernatural.

The things which naturally engage it are all the exercises of meditations, good thoughts, pious reflections, moving images, and firm and detailed resolutions. The time for these is over. I have said so much about this, that there is no need to go over the subject once more.

The other matters which may be called

supernatural in opposition to the last mentioned on account of their mode, are visions, miraculous words, revelations, etc. The soul must be as detached from these as from its natural occupations. This is one of the things which it is most difficult to understand ; yet this is very definitely taught by the saints.

It is to be noted that souls which are raised to high contemplation often enough receive, or think they receive, such favours as these. Sometimes God really bestows them, and this is not at all to be wondered at, seeing what His intimacy with these souls is ; at other times, it is the devil, or mere imagination which simply evokes an appearance of them, and, according to the saints, this happens more often than one thinks. In any case, whether the favours be true or false, there is only one rule : they are never to be desired, still less asked for ; they are even to be rejected if they occur. This is a proposition which it would take some time to explain. St. John of the Cross devotes to it almost all the second Book of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* from the fifteenth chapter onwards. Let it be said briefly that no disadvantage arises from the observance of this rule, and there are very serious ones to be encountered if it is departed from.

The thing that might be dreaded is that the soul might lose the real advantages which must belong to favours when they come from God. Yet one need not fear this in the least. These favours are purely passive, and they bring forth their good effects independently of our acquiescence: " . . . these visions produce their effects passively in the soul, without its being able on its own part to hinder them, though it may do something towards hindering the manner of the vision. . . ."[1]

As to the disadvantages of doing otherwise, they are very great.—First, this is not the best means, nor even the direct means, of uniting the soul to God: the soul unites with Him through the obscure knowledge of faith.—A still more striking disadvantage is the very great danger of illusions. On this matter, listen to a few words from the saints. First of all, St. John of the Cross:

"The revelations and words of God are not always fulfilled as man understands them, or even in their obvious sense. We must, therefore not rely upon visions, nor accept them at once, even when we know that they are revelations, answers, or words of God."[2] . . . "We cannot rely upon visions and revelations, even though coming from God, because it is so easy for us to be deceived in our own

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. xvii. L. T. I, p. 126.

[2] *Ibid.*, ch. xviii. L. T. I, p. 132.

sense."[1] . . . "Over and above the difficulty of not being deceived by the divine visions and locutions, there is usually the further danger of *the devil thrusting himself in among them.*"[2] . . . "You will object and say, Why then does God, if He is displeased, answer such prayers at all? I reply, *the answer occasionally comes from the devil.* But when God answers, it is out of condescension to the human weakness of him who will walk in that way, that he may not become disconsolate, and go back."[3] . . . "I have known one who had these Successive Locutions, but who, on the subject of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, amid some most true, had others full of error. I am terrified by what passes among us in these days. Anyone, who has barely begun to meditate, if he becomes conscious of these locutions during his self-recollection, pronounces them forthwith to be the work of God, and considering them to be so, says, God has spoken to me, or, I have had an answer from God. But it is not true: such an one has been only speaking to himself."[4] . . . "So subtle and so singular are the illusions incidental to them (Interior Formal Words) that, in my opinion, no soul, who does not deal with them as with an enemy, can possibly escape delusions in a greater, or less degree, in many of them."[5]

St. Teresa, too, fears imagination and the devil. "There are persons—I have known such—so weak in the head and in their imagination that they think that they see everything that comes into their minds. This is a very dangerous state."[6] In her *Second Relation* to

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. xix. L. T. I, p. 139.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. xxi. L. T. I, p. 150.
[3] *Ibid.*, ch. xxi. L. T. I, p. 147.
[4] *Ibid.*, ch. xxix. L. T. I, p. 190.
[5] *Ibid.*, ch. xxx. L. T. I, p. 198.
[6] *The Interior Castle*, Fourth Mansion, ch. iii.

Father Rodriguez Alvarez, in 1575, she declares that she never asks God to give her any more than He desires ; and she steadfastly refuses to put a question for the Father as to the Earthly Paradise, for fear of being deceived by the devil.—Listen to the advice which she gives her daughters in the *Interior Castle :*

"Here I shall be satisfied with giving you a very important piece of advice. When you know or hear it said that God grants these favours to some souls, never ask or want Him to lead you by the same way. It is a way which may seem good to you, and worthy of all esteem and respect, but it is not advisable to ask for or desire it for several reasons. First, there is a lack of humility in wishing for a favour which is undeserved. . . . Secondly, when one ventures to form such wishes, one is already in error or in great danger of becoming so, since if we leave the door the least little bit ajar, it will be enough for the devil to set hosts of traps for us. Thirdly, the violence of one's desire carries away one's imagination, and thus one imagines that one sees and hears what one neither sees nor hears, just as one thinks in the night of what one has strongly wished for during the day."[1]

During contemplation the Holy Ghost acts upon the soul in a variety of ways ; and very often it is impossible to say whether a grace then received is a *gratuitous* grace or a *sanctifying* grace. According to St. John of the Cross there are only two sorts of favours,

[1] *The Interior Castle*, Sixth Mansion, ch. ix.

which are apparently gratuitous, in which the soul may rejoice. First, *substantial words:* these are sudden enlightenings imparted to the soul by God and contributing to its sanctification; and they effect the dispositions which they recommend. The second grace consists of certain *divine perceptions* which enlighten the heart and the mind as to the general notion of God perceived by faith. They form a mode of union. They are great graces, and, in the form of substantial touches, the greatest grace given by God; for these touches effect the spiritual marriage of the soul and God.[1] Nothing can be more precious. The soul which has once received them can recall them often, and the memory of them partly renews their first effects.

Although the soul is forbidden to seek for graces which are strictly speaking extraordinary, nevertheless a faithful account of one's experiences should be given to a practised and skilled director.[2] If such a spiritual

[1] *The Obscure Night*, Book II, chapters xxiii and xxiv.

[2]. Here is a summary of what theologians teach as to private revelations.

They can never be the object of Catholic faith;—they may be an object of divine faith to him who receives them or for those whom they concern, provided that they seem certain. They may become so in the same way as those

director is not available, one takes note of what is certain and of what is good in the enlightenment one has received, and as for the rest one can only trust to the light of faith.

Conclusion.

Such in its broadest outlines is the doctrine of the great masters. It is as simple as it is deep, as solid as it is comforting. Every soul ought to set before itself, as its end, union with God. To attain thereto, one has only *to tend straight towards it*, generously to get rid of all which is not God or for God, and to aspire towards God alone. To find God in one's heart in the first place is no easy matter. The heart is shrouded in darkness by the

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which were made to the prophets of old; but, as a matter of fact, this rarely occurs.

The approbation given them by the Church does not go so far as to guarantee their certainty, but only their pious and edifying character.—Generally, the most that can be obtained with regard to them, by relying on their intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics, is a more or less amount of moral certainty. Respect is due to them, and such an amount of assent as is proportionate to the guarantees they afford. But they never provide a sufficient basis for doctrinal discussion nor for laying down a line of conduct to follow in practice. When they are not intended for one's neighbour or are not sufficiently well-grounded, they ought not to be divulged.

smoky fumes of passion ; but in proportion as the senses become calm, creatures remind the soul, which knows how to turn them to account, of the thought of God ; then God makes Himself felt ; faith becomes transparent, and love fashions its indissoluble bonds.

Nothing is more common and simple than this way : total renunciation and adhesion to the divine will ; sacrifice and love ; in a word, the practice of the most solid virtues, such is the most usual way of attaining to extraordinary union with God.

CHAPTER IV

THE PHASES OF CONTEMPLATION

Summary.—Preliminary.—Utility, difficulty, and division of the subject.—§ 1. Prayer which is *partially passive.* i. *Classification:* (*a*) Recollection; (*b*) Quiet; (*c*) The Sleep of the Powers. ii. The common characteristics of these kinds of prayer: unchanging at bottom, changing in their circumstances. iii. Painful states of Contemplation.—§ 2. Prayer which is *entirely passive.* i. Union: its characteristics and description. ii. Ecstasy: its description; is it of angelic character? iii. Contemplation in the Spiritual Marriage.

Preliminary.

Utility and difficulty of the subject.—The general questions dealt with in the preceding chapters might appear to suffice for the direction of souls. However, St. Teresa insists strongly on the advantage of knowing the graces of interior prayer in detail, and she is far from agreeing with those who think that books treating of such matters should be kept under lock and key. "I write," says she, "under obedience, and also *with an ardent*

desire to captivate souls with the charms of so high a good."[1]

To interest souls is, then, the first advantage of writings of this kind. To enlighten them, this is the second. For "to receive any favour from God is a primary grace. To know the nature of the gift is a second. Lastly, a third is to be able to explain it and impart its comprehension. First of all, the first grace apparently ought to suffice; and nevertheless, if the soul is to go forward without being disturbed and afraid, but with courage, in the path to heaven, trampling under foot all the things of this world, it will be a great advantage to it to understand the nature of the heavenly gifts."[2]

"My desire is," she says elsewhere, "to impart an understanding of these favours, because as soon as God begins to grant them to a soul, at first it does not comprehend them, and knows not how to behave. . . . It is a great happiness to such a soul to see a description of its own experiences; it clearly recognizes the path in which God has placed it. I go further: I say that in order to advance in the different states of interior prayer, it is an immense advantage to know how to act in each

[1] *Life*, ch. xviii. [2] *Ibid.*, ch. xvii.

one of them. As for myself, I suffered much and lost a great deal of time for want of such knowledge."[1]—Lastly, "knowledge, as it appears to me, is of the highest value for such an exercise as this, when it is united with humility. I saw the proof of this a few days ago in some who were eminent in doctrine. In a very short time they made admirable progress."[2]

One cannot but admit that the difficulty of these subjects is proportioned to their utility. St. Francis of Sales gives the reason of this in the following passage: "In mental prayer so many interior movements take place that it is impossible to describe them all, not only on account of their number, but also by reason of their nature and quality, which is spiritual, and therefore not to be unravelled except on broad lines, and in a way which is almost imperceptible to our understandings."[3] Yes, when a soul has entered upon and is advancing in the unitive way or in the life of love, it perceives a really new order of being revealing itself within, a whole world of wonderful and unsuspected phenomena. These marvels are genuine indeed, but we often speak of them as if they were but dreams. And it is of this

[1] *Life*, ch. xiv. [2] *Ibid.*, ch. xii.
[3] *On the Love of God*, Book IV, ch. i.

high psychology that we would now attempt to give a brief description.

Division of the subject.—To describe the innumerable data of the contemplative state, an attempt has been made to reduce them to a certain number of typical facts. But people are not agreed as to whether such groups represent kinds or degrees, or simple varieties, nor as to how many of them there are, nor even as to the principle on which they are to be distinguished from one another.

I shall merely endeavour to follow as faithfully as possible the masters already quoted. On this subject, St. Teresa writes copiously; St. Francis of Sales, in his wonderful little treatise, carefully adhered to the footsteps of St. Teresa, while not giving too definite details as to the limits of the various kinds; St. John of the Cross, who only describes the states of prayer incidentally, gives the same phases as St. Teresa, as may be easily seen by looking over the contents of *A Spiritual Canticle*, or by reading chapter xxii which contains an outline of them, and chapter xiii in which the holy writer refers to the St. Teresa's detailed descriptions, which he fully approves. For it is not at all true, as has often been said, that the *Spiritual Canticle* is merely a description of

the spiritual marriage; the first twenty-one Stanzas describe the different stages through which the soul must pass to attain thereto.

On what principle are we to take our stand in order to classify the facts of the contemplative state?—On their order in time? But there is hardly any such order: "There is no state of prayer so high that it is not often necessary to come back to the beginning."[1] —On the intensity of the divine action? Yes, this is St. Teresa's principle. And this is plainly right: since the contemplative state is essentially a kind of passive prayer, its degree is to be measured by the greater or less amount of passivity one finds in it. Hence a growing passivity will be the mark of the increase of God's action.

It will be remembered that St. Teresa throws this principle into relief by making use of the famous comparison of the different ways of watering a garden.

"I see I shall have to make use of certain comparisons. . . . The following will do for my purpose. I have read or heard it somewhere or other. . . . He who would give himself to prayer ought to imagine that he is undertaking to make a garden to please the Saviour's eyes out of a piece of ground which is sterile and covered with thorns. . . . The plants must be most carefully

[1] *Life*, ch. xiii.

watered. . . . There are, I think, four ways of watering a garden: the first is by drawing the water from a well by hand, and that means hard work; the second is by use of a *noria* (rope and bucket), and in this way more water is obtained with less labour; the third is by getting the water from a stream or rivulet, which is much better than either of the two preceding ways; the ground is more deeply soaked, and it is not necessary to water it so often, and the gardener has far less toil; lastly, the fourth and best of all is an abundance of rain, since then God takes it upon Himself to water the garden without the least labour on our part. . . . In this way I trust I may succeed in giving you some idea of the four degrees of prayer to which the Lord in His goodness has sometimes been pleased to raise my soul."[1]

Thus, the greater God's help is, the less need there is of spontaneous effort.

On this principle, it is possible at the outset to lay down a very clear and most important distinction between partially and entirely passive kinds of prayer. I should like to call the first imperfect contemplation, and the second perfect contemplation. Unfortunately, these expressions are generally used in a sense which is much more indefinite. The kinds of prayer which are entirely passive begin with the prayer of union: they are represented by the last of the four ways of watering a garden. Kinds of prayer which are partially passive, that is to say all the kinds which precede the fourth, are repre-

[1] *Life*, ch. xi.

sented by the second and third ways of watering the ground. The first way of watering it represents prayer which is purely active.

§ 1. Prayer which is partially passive.

St. Teresa deals with this kind of prayer in her *Life*, chapters xiv-xvii; in the *Interior Castle*, the Fourth Mansion ("There the natural is mixed with the supernatural." Ch. iii); in the *Way of Perfection*, chapters xxx *ff.*; in her various *Relations;* and here and there in other places.—St. Francis of Sales treats of it in the sixth Book of his *Treatise of the Love of God.*

Those who desire to have a considerable quantity of information as to this kind of prayer ought to read these passages. In this chapter I have only time enough to give a brief explanation of them and perhaps contribute to make the study of them easier.

i. *Classification.*[1] — St. Teresa and St. Francis of Sales enumerate three kinds of

[1] Not to omit anything, let it be added that St. Teresa also indicates a few graces before these, of which they are perhaps only an attenuated kind, e.g., "a very habitual and tender feeling of devotion . . . which may apparently be to some extent the result of our efforts" (*Life*, ch. x).—So, too, before recollection, "God ever felt to be present" (*Second Relation* to Fr. Alvarez).

supernatural prayer before that of union: recollection, quiet, and the sleep of the powers. But they often confuse them with one another. St. Teresa sometimes insists on the special note of the one or the other, and sometimes she ignores it. St. Francis of Sales describes the three, showing both their progressive gradation and their unity.

(*a*) *Recollection.*—The first of these kinds of prayer is recollection. What shows how often the natural is closely mingled with the supernatural is the fact that St. Teresa was at first unable to recognize the supernatural character of this kind of prayer. In her *Life*, she does not speak of it as a supernatural kind of prayer, or if she does so, she confuses it with that of quiet, in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters. In the *Way of Perfection*, she carefully analyzes this kind of prayer in the thirtieth and thirty-first chapters; she even describes the supernatural element in it, while saying at the same time that it is a natural prayer:

"It is called the prayer of recollection because in it the soul collects its powers together and enters into itself with its God. There, the divine Master gives it instruction, and in this way grants to it more quickly than in any other the prayer of quiet. . . . It is like a warrior who withdraws into a fortress to take shelter from the attacks

of the enemy; thus the soul calls all its senses within itself, and detaches them from all external things with such authority that the eyes of the body close of their own accord to things visible so that those of the soul may become more inwardly penetrating. . . . As soon as you put yourselves in a state of prayer, you will feel your powers gather together within you, just as bees enter into a hive and shut themselves within it to make honey. This will take place without any effort or care of your own."[1]

In spite of the supernatural elements, which are apparently perceptible in such prayer and which later on the saint observes in it, she draws the following conclusion in the next chapter:

"Know, then, that this is nothing supernatural, but that it depends on your will, and that we can thus bring it about with that *ordinary assistance* from God which we need to perform any act whatsoever, even that of having a good thought. For this is not a case of the silence of our faculties, but of a simple withdrawal of our powers into the depths of the soul. . . . In conclusion, then, if anyone desires to acquire this *habit* of recollection, it is *one that depends upon ourselves.* . . ."[2]

Apparently she is describing the same kind of prayer in the *Interior Castle*, in the third chapter of the Fourth Mansion, and in her *Second Relation* to Father Alvarez, though she now recognizes its supernatural character: "I will briefly speak of another kind of prayer *which I have dealt with elsewhere*, and which almost always precedes the prayer of quiet. It is a kind of recollection which also appears

[1] *The Way of Perfection*, ch. xxx. [2] *Ibid.*, ch. xxxi.

to me to be *supernatural.* In fact, it is obtained neither by withdrawing into dim places, nor by closing one's eyes. It depends upon nothing external, for one's eyes close of their own accord, and one instinctively tries to be alone."[1]—To describe it she makes use of curious comparisons with some of which we have already become acquainted, that of the hedgehog and the tortoise, also employed by St. Francis of Sales, and this other: "The powers are like the dwellers in a castle who have gone forth to join with the enemy; they would fain return, but in vain. The great king who reigns within calls them with a low and penetrating summons, and they immediately return within."—The note of this kind of prayer, according to St. Teresa, is that the powers, while recollected so far as God is concerned, are nevertheless able to act, that they can be controlled and are to be used, unless God Himself put them in a state of repose or suspend them.

In the *Second Relation* to Father Alvarez, the mind of St. Teresa comes out more clearly than anywhere else:

"The first kind of *supernatural prayer, in my opinion,* which I have experienced, is an interior recollection

[1] *The Interior Castle,* Fourth Mansion, ch. iii.

spiritually perceived: and it seems to have within it new senses almost akin to those that are external; it apparently endeavours to get rid of the disturbance arising from the agitation of the latter, and sometimes carries them along with it. One is glad to close one's bodily eyes and ears so as not to see or hear anything except what one is taken up with, that is to say, so as to have dealings with God alone. In this state, one does not lose the use of any of one's powers: one retains it in full, but only to busy oneself with God. . . . From this recollection sometimes arise both quiet and delightful peace."

This final teaching of St. Teresa on the subject of supernatural recollection, which is moreover the definitive expression of her mind, was taken up by St. Francis of Sales, and set forth almost in the same way in his *Treatise of the Love of God*.[1] In chapter i will be found quotations showing how mystical contemplation takes place according to this holy writer.

(*b*) *Quiet.*—St. Teresa never fails to treat of quiet or of "divine tastes." When she omits to speak of other forms of partial contemplation, she confines herself to quiet. It is of this quiet that she speaks in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of her *Life*. It is not at all easy to see wherein it differs from recollection when the latter is at all accentuated. It is, however, apparently clear

[1] Book VI, ch. vii.

that in quiet the powers are more at a standstill, and that they need not be used either for vocal or mental prayer, that is to say, unless God Himself induce us to pray. Here is St. Teresa's brief description of it: "There is a quiet, and a delightful interior peace, so that the soul apparently has nothing left to wish for: even speaking, I mean to say vocal prayer, and meditation are then burdensome to it; it desires only to love."[1]

St. Francis of Sales speaks of it thus: "The soul being thus recollected within itself in God or before God sometimes becomes so gently attentive to the goodness of its Well-Beloved that its attention seems hardly to be conscious, so simply and delicately is it exercised. . . . And this amiable spiritual repose is what the Blessed virgin Teresa of Jesus calls *the prayer of quiet;* and it hardly differs from what she terms the *Sleep of the Powers*, if, indeed, I rightly understand her."[2]

(*c*) *The Sleep of the Powers.*—Nevertheless St. Teresa appears to give a place of great importance to this kind of prayer in her *Life*, since she makes it the third sort of water, or the third way of watering the garden, and she

[1] *Second Relation.*
[2] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. viii.

devotes two chapters to it, the sixteenth and the seventeenth. Yet, in truth, it is only a very deep kind of quiet: "I well understood that in it there was not a perfect union of all the powers with God, but the soul was more united with Him than in the preceding state of prayer."[1]—"The powers are almost entirely united with God, but they are not so far lost in Him as to cease all activity."[2] —Lastly, in her *Second Relation* to Father Alvarez: "Out of quiet ordinarily arises a sleep which is called the sleep of the powers, in which, however, they are not swallowed up, nor so suspended that the state can be described as one of rapture. *Nor is it fully union.*"

In the *Way of Perfection*, she does not speak of this sort of prayer.—In the *Interior Castle*, there is a word by the way: "Do some souls enter into what is called *the spiritual sleep*, which goes rather *beyond* what I have spoken of?" She has just spoken of quiet.

It is true, then, as St. Francis of Sales says, that there is no marked difference between quiet and the sleep of the powers.

Since that is the case, there seems to be little use in studying each of these forms of prayer in order to classify under each of them interior

[1] *Life*, ch. xvi. [2] *Ibid.*

spiritual phenomena. Any classification of the kind cannot be sure or strict. Moreover, we shall refrain from attempting anything of the kind, so as to go rather more deeply into all of these kinds of prayer considered as a whole. And this is what is done by St. Francis of Sales in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of the sixth Book of his *Treatise of the Love of God.*

ii. *The common characteristics of partially passive kinds of prayer.*—To ascertain the characteristics of this partial sort of contemplation, one must: (1) distinguish it from that which is not as yet contemplation; (2) distinguish it from perfect contemplation; (3) describe it in itself.

The first question has been treated of fully enough in the first chapter. It is a *loving attention to God*, or *waiting upon God*, effected by the Holy Ghost,—a love which is sufficiently real and strong and living to set the soul fast in God in the contemplation of what He is;—but a love which depends not upon ourselves, and which is only possible through the coming of grace; hence, a love we receive from God, and in which we feel that we are rather passive than active.

The second question, as to the difference

there is between the utmost degree of such contemplation and the prayer of union, the first kind of prayer which is altogether passive has been already touched upon; we shall return to it soon in greater detail, when we have to deal with this kind of prayer.

What, then, is such contemplation as this, considered in itself? Let us leave on one side just now any accidental circumstances: we will return to them anon: let us now describe its unchanging substance.

(*a*) *Its unchanging substance.—It is an act of love, and therefore an act of will.* So much is it an act of will that sometimes one seems to love without knowing it, to love without having any object of affection, so that it has been a matter of serious discussion as to whether there is such a thing as love without knowledge. Clearly, there is not. But often the indispensable knowledge is only to be found in an implicit form, and it is unconscious, and hence the love itself is the only thing one is aware of.

It appears to be important to note the fact. It may be easily verified in the writings of the mystics. Let us quote only a few passages. "Then," says St. Francis of Sales, "all the powers of the soul are gathered into a wonderful repose, with so perfect a development that

one can perceive nothing but the will, which like a sort of spiritual sense of smell is sweetly occupied in becoming unconsciously aware of the incomparable good of possessing the presence of God."[1]—"The will is *so strongly caught* by the divine presence that it ceases not to relish the savour of its sweetness, although the memory and the understanding may have escaped and broken away from it so far as to go after strange and unprofitable thoughts."[2]—"*The will is the only power desired by God*, but all the others run after it to be united to God with it."[3]

The last quotation supplies the final reason of the fact to which attention has been drawn. What else, in fact, do God and the soul propose to themselves, if it be not union and love ?

St. John of the Cross, too, calls upon us to remark that union with God is a matter of love and not of knowledge: "God does not communicate Himself because of . . . the knowledge the soul has of God, but because of the love which is the fruit of that knowledge. For as love is the union of the Father and of the Son, *so is it also of God and of the soul.*"[4]

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. ix.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. x. [3] *Ibid.*, Book VII, ch. ii.
[4] *A Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza XIII. L. T. II, p. 72.

St. Teresa[1] appears to follow this thought out to its conclusion when she writes: "To come to these Mansions, the essential thing is not to think much, but to love much."[2] She likes calling the prayer of quiet the "divine tastes," which shows how great is the part played therein by the will. She insists upon this preponderant part of the will in many other passages: "In this first stage of recollection, the soul reposes delightfully in God; *the will remains united to Him.*"[3]—"Often while the understanding wanders, the *will* finds itself thus united with God."[4]—"The soul understands that *the will alone is bound.*"[5]—"In union, the soul is swallowed up in enjoyment without understanding what it enjoys."[6]

Hence this kind of prayer is above all made of love.

How is this love felt? In the way in which it is expressed by all the words commonly used by the mystics. "All these loving terms,"

[1] In reading the mystical writers it will be found that some of them are rather careful in taking account of a distinction, which is overlooked by others, between contemplation and union. Contemplation is strictly speaking a matter of the mind, union of will. Often the word contemplation is applied to both.

[2] *The Interior Castle*, Fourth Mansion, ch. i.

[3] *Life*, ch. xv. [4] *Ibid.* [5] *Ibid.*, ch. xvii.

[6] *Ibid.*, ch. xviii.

says St. Francis of Sales, "are drawn from the resemblance there is between the affections of the heart and the bodily passions."[1] Now the words in most ordinary use, together with the expression "loving expectation," are those of recollection, repose or quiet, sweetness, slumber or sleep of the powers, divine tastes. Clearly that is truly experienced which these words signify; one feels oneself before God, bound to Him by love; His presence is a delight; one finds satisfaction or happiness in Him; one has pleasure or joy in God, which is the first form of love, according to St. Thomas, and in this pleasure one finds repose and recollection, and one falls asleep in an ineffable enjoyment. Calm, peace, sweetness, such are the terms employed.

Let us quote a few sample passages from the saints; but we should read their beautiful descriptions of these things at greater length. First, let us listen to St. Teresa:

"Then the soul tastes the savour of inexpressible delights in which the very body participates to a high degree."[2]—"When it pleases God to grant us this supernatural kind of prayer, it is along with a *peace, tranquillity, and sweetness which are inexpressible* that such tastes arise in

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[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. xiii.
[2] *The Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxiii.

the lowest depths of the soul."[1]—"There is a sleep of the powers, in which, without being entirely lost in God, they nevertheless no longer understand their own operations. The soul tastes of *happiness, sweetness, and pleasure*, with a fulness which is incomparable with anything in the past."[2] —"The great God desires the soul to understand that He is near it, and that it can therefore speak to Him without needing any intermediaries and without raising its voice, because He is so near as to hear the least motion of the lips. Such language as this may seem strange; for do we not know that God always hears us since He is always with us? But here our Sovereign, our adorable Master wishes us to know that He is listening to us, and that we are experiencing the effects of His presence. He makes plain His design of operating in a special manner in our soul by pouring into it *a great interior and external satisfaction*, which is infinitely different from all the vain pleasures of this world; and thus He seems to fill the void created by our sins. The soul *relishes this peace* in its inmost depths, but *without knowing how or whence it is received.* In this state it is often unaware of what it ought to do or desire or ask for. It feels as if it had found all it could wish for, but it knows not what it has found, and I own I am unable to impart the understanding of it."[3]

And here is a pleasing comparison borrowed by St. Francis of Sales from St. Teresa bearing upon the same question:

"Have you never noticed, Theotima, the eagerness with which little children sometimes fasten upon their mother's breast? One sees them mumbling, and clutching and pressing the breast, sucking the milk so greedily as to cause the mother pain. But as soon as the refreshing milk has begun to assuage the eager thirst of their little mouths,

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[1] *The Interior Castle*, Fourth Mansion, ch. ii.
[2] *Life*, ch. xvi. [3] *Ibid.*, ch. xiv.

and as the pleasant odours have risen to their brain and sent them to sleep, Theotima, you will see them shut their eyes fast and gradually fall asleep, without letting go the breast, though they no longer affect it in any way by the slow and almost imperceptible movement of the lips, by which they go on drawing the milk, swallowing it imperceptibly ; and this they do without thinking about it, but certainly not without enjoyment ; for if the nipple be taken away from them before they are fast asleep, they awake and cry bitterly, showing how annoyed they are by losing it, and how much they delighted in the possession of it. Now it is thus with the soul which is in repose and quiet in the presence of God ; for it almost insensibly imbibes the sweetness of that presence without any agitation or operation, and without doing anything with any of its faculties, except solely with the will, which it moves gently and almost imperceptibly, like a mouth by which enter in delectation and satisfaction in the enjoyment of the divine presence."[1]

St. Teresa calls attention in the last passage quoted from her writings to the fact that the soul understands not the delightful peace which it enjoys. And this is why, while happy and calm in giving oneself up to this divine intoxication without any thought about it, one becomes disquieted as soon as one tries to explain it either to oneself or to others. Union is a case of the same kind: the soul feels the certainty of having been with God, but in what way? It cannot tell. The more profound, ready, and passive is its attention to God, the further is such attention from that of

[1] *The Treatise of the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. ix.

a reflective nature which one experienced at the outset and could somewhat comprehend: "Attention now seems to be hardly attention in reality."

Furthermore, as has already been observed, it is often a sort of love that has no actual perception of any object, a circumstance which makes it deeply mysterious. St. Francis of Sales makes this curious remark: "The will, indeed, only perceives the good by way of the understanding; but when once perceived, *the understanding is no longer required for the exercise of love.*"[1] Hence there remains apparently nothing but a sort of virtual and implicit cognizance of the object which is God (and this is, indeed, a very common feature of the rest of our life: we distinctly wish for something, and then we undertake to do it without further actually thinking about it). And thus it is here. Satisfaction is essentially a pleasure, a joy in the beloved object: as soon as the perception of God is merely implicit, the soul is given up to the divine sweetness, happiness, and intoxication which it understands not, but which, arising in God, seems to bear within itself an assurance of its divinity.

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. iv.

(*b*) *Changing circumstances.*—On this common substratum, God embroiders a thousand patterns.

Variety is already to be noted in the circumstances of frequency, intensity, and continuity. Sometimes there is but a spark of love : one must enjoy it as sweetly as possible, but at the beginning, it is often a long time before it is repeated ; then it becomes more frequent, and at last almost habitual, during prayer. Sometimes, too, it is very weak : one already feels happy, and in a manner transported, when one has so far experienced no graces of this kind ; but if one has known on other occasions such as were more deeply felt, one is aware of what is wanting in those now experienced. Lastly, one must more or less frequently renew one's attention to God so as to revive such impressions of love as are experienced, and it is by such "reloading," to use an expression of St. Francis of Sales, that prayer is prolonged.

Then there is variety so far as the powers engaged are concerned. In this sort of prayer, one's different spiritual faculties or powers are clearly perceived. But what always occurs, as has been said already, is that the will is taken possession of. Nevertheless, the will is not yet sufficiently strongly acted upon to dis-

appear ; the will, as St. Teresa says, is not "entirely lost in God."[1]

As to the memory and the imagination, their state varies a great deal. Sometimes they remain under our control so that we can employ them in making short vocal prayers ; or else the soul is filled with distinct thoughts, which are divine graces, and which one regards as His voice. It corresponds with them by means of distinct acts and promises ; or else it is God alone who is the speaker, or the soul alone, according to the action of divine grace. All these various states are described with much subtlety by St. Francis of Sales.[2] Sometimes the soul's inebriation is shown in an exuberance of interior acts : it prays for the Church, it thanks the good God, St. Teresa even used to compose hymns.[3] This is what has well been called *prayerful* quiet. But very often the powers, after being taken up with what has been going on in the will, and after having done their best to understand it, find themselves as it were suddenly overwhelmed, stupefied, or inebriated. This is what is called *silent* quiet.

[1] *Life*, ch. xv.
[2] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. xi.
[3] *Life*, ch. xvi.

It is also very common for the memory and imagination, far from concurring in the state of prayer, to wander off in all directions ; and then there are a number of more or less incoherent associations that terribly vex the soul, and which were one of St. Teresa's torments. For a long time the saint tried to find some remedy for this state of things, but did not discover it. This kind of inner prayer may be at the same time very distraught and very united : the will is " hooked," says St. Francis of Sales, and it does not let go. The soul usually sees these two things very clearly : on the one hand, the incoherence of its thoughts, and on the other, a kind of *captivated* condition of the will. What is to be done then ? One must gently bring one's attention back to God, and then the powers will often become concentrated ; but above all one must plunge the will ever more and more deeply into His love, for in this way the powers are best recovered. This kind of quiet might be called *wandering* quiet.

Then there is also the quiet of action which is sometimes designated *active* quiet. This grace consists in the fact that amidst its occupation one feels the will gently united with God. It is just as it is in ordinary

quiet with this difference, that in the latter one feared to stir lest the good one was enjoying should disappear; whilst in the former, one fears not to carry on the most various actions, being busy with what one does in God and for God, and the quiet continues. Some seem to receive this grace rather than the other. Moreover, St. Francis of Sales observes that some unite with God in fulfilling what they do for Him rather than in confining themselves to waiting upon His presence.[1]

St. Francis of Sales and St. Teresa are evidently in accord in their descriptions of quiet. Before beginning to describe *union*, St. Francis of Sales speaks of other phenomena, without saying expressly to what kind of contemplation they belong. Other writers classify them otherwise. This is, I think, because they are to be found in slightly differing forms *in several stages* of the spiritual ascent. Perhaps it would be better to say that they are less forms of contemplation than certain manners in which other facts of a contemplative character, or rather, in which contemplative love is felt at different times. St. Teresa, for instance, does not speak separately of the *liquefaction of love* as does St. Francis of Sales,[2]

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. xi. [2] *Ibid.*, ch. xiii.

but with reference to union, she says that union *liquefies*[1] the soul. It appears to be a constant characteristic of love, which is more or less accentuated according to its extent, to crush spiritual hardness, and to melt and liquefy the soul till it flows into God.—We shall have to speak more at length about another property of love as to which all the mystics are agreed, that is to say, its power to *wound and torment* the soul.

iii. *Painful states of contemplation.*—The state of contemplation has its sufferings as well as its joys. St. Teresa gives astounding details as to the sufferings of contemplatives ; and her descriptions of them are to be found more particularly in her *Life*, chapters xxx and onwards ; in her *Second Relation* to Father Alvarez, in the *Interior Castle*, Fourth Mansion, chapters i and xi ; and in other places. St. John of the Cross is still more astounding in his *Obscure Night of the Soul*, and in the *Spiritual Canticle*. St. Francis of Sales devotes the three last chapters of the sixth Book of the *Treatise of the Love of God* to a description of them.

In what stage of contemplation are the suffer-

[1] *Life*, ch. xviii.

ings of contemplatives to be placed? If it be a question of accessory sufferings not arising out of contemplation in itself, but sent by God according to His good pleasure to those whom He loves, it is plain that such may come at any time and in the most different shapes;—if they are the result of special enlightenment given by God as to His own greatness, the deformity of sin, the Passion of our Lord, such particular graces as these may also be granted at any time;—but there are others, and they are among the most terrible, which necessarily arise from contemplation itself so far as it is, in the words of St. John of the Cross, "an obscure night": these last occur at more regular periods. It is of such, and of those arising from particular graces, that we are now to speak. So as not to have to return to the subject, I shall deal with them without trying to discover whether they belong to the first or to the second part of the contemplative life.

According to St. John of the Cross the phases of suffering in the contemplative state are mainly two:

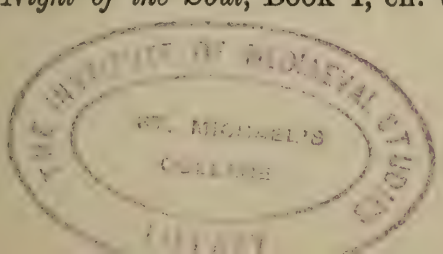
"This night—I have already said that it is contemplation—produces in spiritual men two sorts of darkness or purgations conformable to the two divisions of man's nature into sensitive and spiritual. Thus one night or Sensitive Purgation, wherein the soul is purified or detached, will be

of the senses, harmonizing them with the spirit. The other is that night or Spiritual Purgation wherein the soul is purified or detached in the spirit, and which harmonizes and disposes the soul for union with God in love. The sensitive night is common, and the lot of many: these are the beginners, of whom I shall first speak. The spiritual night is the portion of very few; and they are those who have made some progress, exercised therein, of whom I shall speak hereafter. The first night, or purgation, is bitter and terrible to the sense. The second is not to be compared with it, for it is much more awful to the spirit."[1]

These two nights are separated by a period of very great consolations, though these are not continuous:

"The soul, which God is leading onwards, enters not into the union of love at once when it has passed through the aridities and trials of the first purgation and night of sense. It must spend some time, perhaps years, after quitting the state of beginners, in exercising itself in the state of proficients. In this state—like a man released from a rigorous imprisonment—it occupies itself in divine things with much greater freedom and satisfaction, and *its joy is more abundant and interior than ever it experienced in the beginning before it entered the sensitive night;* its imagination and faculties being no longer tied down, as hitherto, to spiritual thoughts and reflections, it now rises at once to most tranquil and loving contemplation, and finds spiritual sweetness without the fatigue of meditation. But as the purgation of the soul is still somewhat incomplete—the chief part, the purgation of the spirit being wanting, without which, by reason of the mutual connection between our higher and lower nature, man being an individual, the purgation of sense, however violent it may have been, is not finished and perfect—it will never

[1] *The Obscure Night of the Soul*, Book I, ch. viii. L. T. I, pp. 345, 346.



be without some aridities, darkness, and trials, sometimes much more severe than in the past, which are, as it were, signs and heralds of the coming night of the spirit, though not being so lasting as that night. . . ."[1]

This second night is a psychological necessity arising from the nature of the soul and from that of the divine enlightenment:

"So when the divine light of contemplation shines into the soul, not yet perfectly enlightened, it causes spiritual darkness, because it not only surpasses its strength, but because *it obscures it and deprives it of its natural perceptions.* It is for this reason that St. Dionysius and other mystic theologians call infused contemplation a *ray of darkness*, that is, for the unenlightened and unpurified soul. . . ."[2]

At what time does contemplation take this particularly dark and painful character? Towards the period of ecstasy or union. In speaking of quiet I have already drawn attention to its rather incomprehensible nature. But it is much more extraordinary later on, as we shall see, when the powers of the soul are totally and suddenly arrested, and when the soul is found in a kind of mighty transport which is beyond its comprehension. In the thirteenth chapter of his *Spiritual Canticle* St. John of the Cross refers to this purifying martyrdom, along with the beginning of

[1] *The Obscure Night of the Soul*, Book II, ch. i. L. T. I, p. 373.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. v. L. T. I, p. 381.

ecstasies, as being the prelude of the transformation of love. This kind of darkness is not usually uninterrupted ; it appears to alternate with abundant and delightful influxes of light :

"Amid those fervent affections of love, such as the soul has spoken of in the preceding stanzas, the Beloved is wont to visit His Bride tenderly, lovingly, and with great strength of love ; for ordinarily the graces and visits of God are great in proportion to the greatness of those fervours and longings of love which have gone before."[1]—"But the comfort and consolations of God are, by His infinite goodness, proportional to the darkness and emptiness of the soul."[2]—". . . the Beloved reveals to it some glimpses of His grandeur and Godhead, according to its desires. These divine rays strike the soul so profoundly and so vividly, that it is rapt into an ecstasy which in the beginning is attended with great physical suffering and natural fear."[3]

These ecstasies are a prelude to the spiritual espousals : "this spiritual flight signifies a certain high estate and union of love, whereunto, after many spiritual exercises, God is wont to elevate the soul : it is called the Spiritual Espousals of the Word, the Son of God."[4] It comes, too, near the end of the obscure night : "On this happy day the soul not only ceases from its anxieties and loving complaints, but is, moreover, adorned with all grace, entering into

[1] *A Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza XIII. L. T. II, pp. 67, 68.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 67. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 68.
[4] *Ibid.*, Stanza XIV. L. T. II, p. 74.

a state of peace and delight, and of the sweetness of love . . ."[1]

Thus, contemplation is full of pangs, and the pangs arise from its very nature, as is so well shown by St. John of the Cross. The same holy writer also gives a powerful description of the pain caused by the illumination imparted to the soul by God. And these pains are what are so well discerned and analyzed by St. Teresa. But no sort of pain seems to have escaped the penetrating glance of St. Francis of Sales in the three chapters he devotes to them. Let a few lines only be quoted now by way of a hint. Love wounds and pains, says he, because of the *desire* which it almost always leaves behind.

"The sweetness of love is never perfectly sweet because it is not perfect, nor purely sated and satisfied. . . . It is very pleasing provided that it leave not behind it in our heart the goad of desire; but when it leaves this, it leaves along with it great pain. . . . In the exercise of love there is a sort of wound which God Himself sometimes inflicts on the soul which He means highly to perfect. For He imparts to it admirable feelings and unrivalled attractions towards His supreme goodness, as it were urging and soliciting it to love Him, and then it flings itself vehemently as it were to soar higher towards its divine object; but stopping short because it cannot love according to its desire, O God! how incomparable is the pain that it feels! . . . And this unattainable desire is as it were a dart fastened in the side of one who is generous in spirit."[2]

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[1] *A Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza XIV, L. T. II, p. 74.
[2] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. xiii.

Love has a thousand other ways of wounding the heart: when anyone loves us, he wounds us with the desire of loving him; and when we love God and God lets us feel as if He did not love us in return, we are like poor St. Peter who knew not how to prove his love to Jesus. "Sometimes the wound of love occurs from the mere memory of the time past when we had no love of God." Lastly, the soul's torment may arise from the sole thought that love is not loved. But the highest sorrow seems to spring from God's withdrawal of great favours previously given, and from His seeming to cast off the soul for ever.[1]

The admirable thing about these wounds of holy love is that usually "the pain of them is pleasing, and all those who have a sense of it consent thereto, and would not change their pain for all the sweetness of the universe."[2] St. Teresa too tells us that in the highest states of prayer "joy is the dominant thing. And yet at all times," she adds, "at the beginning, mid-way, and at the end of their course, all have their crosses, however various these may be."[3] There are even ecstasies of pain: "In these, the powers are suspended by pain

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VI, ch. xiv and xv.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. xiv. [3] *Life*, ch. xi.

as they are by pleasure in the union of rapture."[1]

§ 2.—Prayer which is entirely passive.

i. *Union.*—In modern treatises one rarely finds any thoroughly clear and uniform teaching as to what distinguishes union from quiet. Union is sometimes said to be prayer which is powerful enough to prevent distractions. This seems very simple and definite, but considered as a definition it is lacking and inaccurate. We saw how quiet is often filled with a sort of delightful inebriation amidst the silence of the memory and imagination. Does this fact change it from being quiet to become union? Clearly not. In chapter III, we also saw how distractions arise even in a state of rapture: the body is as it were "bound," and the "will lost in God," while memory and imagination slacken and wander. Must it then be said that the state of rapture has reverted to quiet? This seems most unlikely. Moreover, St. Francis of Sales asserts that union may exist in the will only.[2] This apparently often takes place in the Spiritual Marriage.

[1] *Life*, ch. xx.
[2] *The Treatise of the Love of God*, Book VII, ch. ii.

Other authors think that along with union arises an altogether extraordinary kind of prayer. Union and ecstasy only differ in degree, say they; but ecstasy is manifestly full of the miraculous. It would be a strange thing if contemplatives in such cases were to pass from one state to another and to enter into the miraculous stage without being conscious of it and without saying anything about it, and if these miracles were to appear to them to be the natural sequel of a state which is not miraculous. As to the physiological phenomena noted in the state of ecstasy, some are miraculous but of rare occurrence, like levitation, aureoles, and absolute insensibility. Moreover they are facts associated with ecstasy rather than ecstasy itself. Then there are others, almost all such as St. Teresa describes in the twentieth chapter of her *Life*, such as a partial cessation of the circulation of the blood, cold in one's extremities, the loss of the functions of the senses, which are easily explained without any resort to the miraculous. This will be shown later on.

The Abbé Saudreau, who has rendered such valuable services to mysticism in so many ways, seems to me at the outset to have been under a misunderstanding on this point. In

his earlier writings he takes up a fairly decided stand in favour of the opinion I am opposing ; but later on he grows more hesitating. I am glad to say that in the second edition of his *Life of Union*, he has quite given up his former view, to judge from the corrections, *e.g.*, in § 371, p. 524, note.

St. Teresa often tried to define the difference between quiet and union. (There seems to be nothing of importance which has appeared since.) I have gathered together all she has said ; after comparing the various passages together, I find there are apparently five characteristic marks of union. All these characteristics are quite harmonious, and flow from one another. They are these :

1. The powers of the soul are completely absorbed in contemplation ; — 2. All work ceases : passivity is complete ;—3. The presence of God is felt within the soul ;—4. The soul is conscious of its union with God ;— 5. Afterwards, it remains sure of having been in God.

We saw that the prayer of union was represented by the rain with which God Himself waters the garden without any work being done by the gardener, while before then work had not been entirely given up. With regard to

the sleep of the powers some quotations have already been given, which should be referred to ; and to them add the following :

"In that prayer which I have called the third kind of water, the soul feels that it is not altogether dead. . . . As I have said, it has a sufficient use of the senses to know that it is in the world and to perceive its solitude. . . . In all the preceding kinds of prayer *the gardener must go on working ;* in reality, it is less a toil than a foretaste of heavenly glory. But in this new state of which I am speaking, there is no further employment of the senses: *the soul is absorbed* in enjoyment without understanding what it enjoys. It feels that it enjoys a good which includes all goods, and yet the nature of this good remains incomprehensible to it. . . . As long as this lasts, any extraneous occupation would be a great embarrassment, a vexation, and a hindrance to so sweet a repose. I say still more : when all the powers are thus united with God, the soul could not be occupied with anything else, even if it wished to do so. As to the nature and the mode of this kind of prayer which is called union, I could not explain them. Their explanation belongs to mystical theology, and I am ignorant of the very terms of that science."[1]

"Here all the powers lose their natural activity, and are so far suspended that they are absolutely unconscious of their own operations. If one was meditating beforehand on some mystery, it fades from memory as completely as if one had never thought of it. If one was reading, one forgets all about what one was reading of, and is unable to fix one's mind upon it. And thus is it with vocal prayers. Here then that importunate butterfly, the memory, finds its wings burnt and loses its power of fluttering hither and thither. The will is doubtless deeply engrossed in loving, but it understands not how. As for the understanding,

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[1] *Life*, ch. xviii.

if it understands, it is in a way in which it is unaware, and it cannot comprehend what it takes in."[1]

"When all the powers are united, they cannot do anything whatever: the understanding is as it were stupefied by what it contemplates; the will loves more than the understanding can conceive, but the soul can neither understand nor say whether it loves or what it is doing. In my opinion, the memory is then as if it were non-existent, and so is the imagination. As for the senses, not only are they deprived of their natural activity, but one would think that they were lost, and this, methinks, is in order that the soul may more closely belong to the divine object of its enjoyment."[2]

In all the above passages two things are clearly affirmed: that *the powers are totally swallowed up, and that all work ceases;* these are the first two characteristics already referred to.

Here a remark must be made as to the state of the discursive faculties which, according to the old mystical writers, are the memory and imagination. Are these faculties "united" or suspended? Have they any part in the action of the understanding and the will, or are they as it were strengthless, all the activity of the soul being absorbed elsewhere? The different expressions used by St. Teresa admit of either opinion; but, as she says, her language sometimes lacks precision when dealing with philosophic questions: she confused the under-

[1] *Life*, ch. xviii. [2] *Second Relation.*

standing and the imagination until the very end of her life.[1] Nevertheless, at the end her thought grows clearer; "the memory and imagination are as it were non-existent" is what she usually says.—St. Francis of Sales is also of this opinion; moreover, he gives us this very simple reason for it: it is inconceivable that memory and imagination, which are discursive faculties, should have a rôle in this pure intuition, *simplex intuitus*, as perfect contemplation is called by St. Thomas.[2] "Sometimes this union is made of all the faculties of the soul, which all gather around the will *not to unite with it, for they are not all capable of doing so*, but to give the will greater readiness in effecting union."[3]

The third mark of union is that contemplation is felt within the soul. "There is this difference between the prayer of quiet and that wherein the soul is entirely united with God, that in the latter *the soul has not even to swallow the divine food; it is God who imparts*

[1] *The Interior Castle*, Fourth Mansion, ch. i.

[2] *Summa*, $2^a\ 2^{æ}$, q. 186, a. 3.

[3] *On the Love of God*, Book VII, ch. ii. Since these faculties are not, strictly speaking, united, but rather brought to a standstill, we must not be surprised if they are sometimes relaxed in distractions without any modification in the state of contemplation itself, for it is outside them.

it to one inwardly, one knows not how. . . . The prayer of quiet appears to demand a slight effort, but this is accompanied by so much sweetness as to become almost imperceptible."[1]

The fourth characteristic is the soul's feeling of being united. "What I mean to set forth here is what the soul feels in this divine union. Union, as we know, is the condition of two things which were previously separated and now make one only. . . ."[2]—"It understands (in the state of quiet), but otherwise than by the means of the external senses, that it is now near its God, and that if it were to approach a little nearer, *it would become one with Him by means of union*."[3]

The fifth characteristic is to be found in the following passage:

"I come back to the sign which is, as I have said, quite a distinctive one. You know it. God makes the soul utterly foolish in order to impress it with true wisdom: It neither sees nor hears nor understands while it is united with God; this time, however, lasts but a little while and seems even shorter than it is. God Himself settles within the soul in such a way that when it comes to itself again, *it cannot doubt but that it has been in God and God in it*. . . . But, you will ask, how could the soul perceive and understand that it has been in God and God in it, if, while the union took place, it was incapable of understanding and

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[1] *The Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxiii.
[2] *Life*, ch. xviii.
[3] *The Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxiii.

perceiving? I reply that it does not perceive at all at the time, but that it sees it clearly afterwards, not by way of vision, but by an abiding certainty that God alone can give it."[1]

If we look at the matter attentively, we find that all this is quite harmonious and consistent. It is because the divine action is powerful enough to absorb the soul's activity in its entirety that the powers are thus suspended and inactive; and because the powers are suspended all work ceases, since work could only be exercised in their use. These two characteristics are correlative and really only one. This is the essential characteristic, for it belongs to what radically constitutes mystical contemplation, that is to say, to the divine action which replaces human activity, and it determines its mode, showing how, in this kind of prayer, God acts in another manner than in those which preceded it.

From this first characteristic arise others which are related to the impressions experienced: first, *all takes place within the soul;* it is because our powers are not brought into play by us that we are not conscious of them, and cannot taste them with the kind of "mouth," to use a favourite expression of

[1] *The Interior Castle*, Fifth Mansion, ch. i.

the mystics, with which we usually relish the sense of devotion. In this case, all takes place in the intuitive intelligence and in the will, faculties which seem to constitute the basis and substance of the soul. St. John of the Cross, in a passage already quoted in chapter I, points to experiences so deep and intimate that, while their seat is in the will, they appear to occur in the very substance of the soul.[1]

Doubtless it is owing to this presence of God in the very substance of the soul that one feels as if one were more than pervaded through and through, in a manner as if we were one with Him. However, one must acknowledge that there is in this power of love to bind together, and to unite those who love to the point of fusion, a great mystery which can only be understood by God Himself.

After what has just been said, there is no great difficulty about explaining why one carries away with one after union the certainty of having been in God : one was love of God, union with God, God in one's soul, and one's soul in God. This infused certitude remains as an unwavering conviction, though one cannot account for it.

With the help of the particulars already

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. xxxii.

given, and of a number of other features set forth abundantly by St. Teresa, together with the subtle analyses of St. Francis of Sales, we may frame this general sketch of the subject of union. The time of the soul's union and perfect absorption is very easily recognized and quite clearly distinguished from other states, however approximate they may be: the soul, indeed, often feels a desire to love while it is unable to love, it feels as if it loved, but not with its whole strength, and lastly, it really feels when it loves to the full extent of its capacity. Union hardly takes place in the beginning, except after a prolonged prayer of quiet; later it may occur from the beginning of interior prayer, or even apart from it. The soul, perhaps embarrassed with external matters, tries to get free from them, and to become recollected; loving expectancy of God becomes keener. By degrees the memory and imagination seem to die away, and this happens occasionally all of a sudden. The will, however, so far can only be partly absorbed: there is a tendency towards union, but so far not union itself; one prays for union to take place, one aspires and is anxious, and then, either insensibly, or else in a manner which is easily perceived, the will is lost and union is com-

plete. At the same time, if it has not happened before, memory and imagination are both altogether lost.

At this point, it seems as if there were no further act of the soul, and yet the soul is all action. One is union with God and love of God. One can scarcely distinguish between oneself and Him, though one is conscious of one's own personality; one does not tend towards Him, one possesses Him. One appears as it were closely ensphered with Him, or rather as if one were oneself some motionless sphere of love. One enjoys, feeling that the goal is now attained. Sometimes there is a sort of sudden start: one perceives that one could plunge still deeper into the divine, enter into it more profoundly; and then arises a sweet and strong aspiration to lose oneself in Him to the utmost capacity of one's fresh-found powers. Sometimes, on the other hand, memory and imagination awaken to some extent, but there is no radical change in one's sense of union; and the dispersed faculties are quickly absorbed anew. As one does not understand what is occurring, one can only yield oneself up to God's action; yet one retains consciousness nevertheless of what is going on, and in a manner one is a

spectator of all one's states. If one is unable to contribute anything towards this state of prayer, one can nevertheless go counter to it; and if duty call one away, one is able to withdraw. Generally, the will remains long united with God amidst one's occupations. Hence, what is entirely passive is the state of contemplation itself.

The above description is especially applicable to a state of union bordering upon ecstasy, at least so far as interior illumination and consolation are concerned. Sometimes, when all takes place in the way thus described, the soul is inwardly conscious of a sense of transport which is ineffable and absolutely obscure. This is particularly that form of contemplation which is full of darkness and anxiety.

In the state of union, as in other mystical phenomena, there is an almost incalculable variety of *nuances*. St. Francis of Sales has observed them with care and described a large number of them. Sometimes it occurs by means of "brief outpourings and regatherings"; or else "by some insensible pressure and progress in the goodness of God. . . . Sometimes without our co-operation. . . . Sometimes with it . . . Sometimes we begin it. . . . Sometimes it occurs without our

being conscious of God's action or of our own co-operation. . . . At other times we feel a tightening of heart. . . . Sometimes this contraction occurs in the will only. . . . Sometimes in the understanding also. . . . Sometimes in all the faculties of the soul along with the will. . . ."[1]

In the following description St. Teresa admirably brings out the external effects of union, which border on those of ecstasy :

"While thus seeking its God, the soul feels a very keen and delightful sense of entirely fainting away ; it falls into a sort of swoon, in which the body gradually loses its breath and all its powers. It cannot make the slightest motion of the hands without the greatest and most painful effort. The eyes close involuntarily ; and if they remain open, hardly anything can be seen. It is incapable of reading, even if it would do so ; letters are discernible, but since the mind is inactive, they can neither be distinguished nor co-ordinated. If anyone speaks to one, the voice is audible, but what is heard is unintelligible. . . . One tries to speak in vain, because one can neither frame nor utter a single word."[2]

In conclusion, here is a summary description of St. John of the Cross : "Daily experience proves that during union the imagination is as it were lost in general forgetfulness of all things, and memory entirely absorbed in the sovereign Good."[3]

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VII, chapters i and ii.
[2] *Life*, ch. xviii.
[3] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book III, ch. i.

All that has been hitherto said about union seems to realize the theological idea of love intense *super omnia*, love in every way perfect. Love is the bond between the soul and God: when love is perfect, union, which is its effect, should be so too. But at this point it is perfect: love is the supreme master of the soul, and all gives way to it; ". . . God gathers and collects together all the strength, faculties, and desires of the soul, spiritual and sensitive, so that their harmonious combination may direct all its energies and all its forces towards the real and perfect fulfilment of the first commandment of the law, which comprehends within its scope the whole nature and gifts of man; namely, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength.'"[1]

On this state of prayer St. Teresa makes the following remark: "In my opinion, when this union is real, it is the greatest grace granted by our Lord in the spiritual way, or at any rate one of the greatest."[2]

ii. *Ecstasy.*—All that has been said of union is still truer of ecstasy; hence there will

[1] *The Obscure Night*, Book II, ch. xi. L. T. I, p. 407.
[2] *Second Relation.*

be all the less need to speak at length on the subject.

First of all, listen to St. Francis of Sales:

"The perfection of union consists in two things, its purity and strength. . . . When the union of the soul with God is extremely close and well-knit, the theologians term it *inherence* or *adherence*, because thereby the soul is taken, attached, and securely fastened and affixed to the divine Majesty: so that only with much difficulty can it unfasten and withdraw itself. . . . Now the Blessed Mother Teresa of Jesus says excellently well that when union has reached this point of perfection of keeping us captive and fastened to our Lord, it differs in no way from rapture, suspension, or attachment of the spirit; but that it is called union, suspension, or attachment, when it is brief; but when it is of longer duration, it is called ecstasy or rapture; since, in fact, the soul is so firmly and closely attached to God, that it cannot easily become unfastened, it is no longer in itself but in God: just as a crucified body is no more in itself but on the cross, and just as the ivy, which is clinging to the wall, no longer belongs to itself but to the wall."[1]

Two things in particular occur in the state of ecstasy, admiration and love:

"Admiration arises in us through meeting with an unknown and unexpected fresh truth. . . . The admiration of agreeable things strongly fastens and fixes the mind upon what we admire. . . . It has given rise to contemplation or mystical theology, and since this admiration, when it is strong, takes us out of and above ourselves by making our understanding attend keenly and diligently to heavenly things, it therefore bears us off to ecstasy."[2]

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[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VII, ch. iii.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. iv.

—"Charity is a bond . . . Love it is which carries away the understanding to contemplation and the will to union, in such a manner that we must finally conclude with the great St. Denys, that *divine love is ecstatic*, not permitting those who love to belong to themselves but to the Beloved."[1]

Since ecstasy is a superior degree to that of union, it differs from the latter somewhat thus:

The external senses are more dead, one can no longer see or hear; hardly anything can divert one from the state of ecstasy, breathing gets weaker or ceases; the hands grow cold, the head is raised, and the body often becomes very light; it seems as if it would leave the ground, and this sometimes takes place.

The interior senses are more absorbed and powerless, memory and imagination, however, have a few slight awakenings. Generally, one can still keep watch over oneself to a slight extent, and even endeavour to struggle against the state of ecstasy. Usually this is without much effect.

The state of contemplation itself is more perfect: the sense of God's presence is more intimate and powerful; the illumination enjoyed by the soul is brighter; the infused certainty is fuller. God, in discovering Himself in a more mysterious manner, attracts and carries one off to unknown depths. Or else

[1] *On the Love of God*, Book VII., ch. v.

He fuses the soul into Himself ; He drowns and overwhelms the will in Himself. One thinks one has lost one's being in His, or has become identified with Him. In coming to itself, the soul finds it difficult to distinguish between itself and God ; it knows not where to seek Him except within itself.

The greatest grace, according to St. John of the Cross, granted in these favoured hours is that of substantial touches. The soul apparently lies open widely, and even immensely : God enters in, overshadows and covers it, penetrates and absorbs it. It is as conscious of Him as of the daylight. It is able to abide motionless in His love for hour after hour. In this state, it experiences ineffable joys, sometimes too strong, for the body cannot endure them, and afterwards in consequence has to undergo sharp pain. The soul cannot conceive that heaven itself has anything greater in store for it :

" What the soul tastes now in this touch of God, is, in truth, though not perfectly, a certain foretaste of everlasting life. It is not incredible that it should be so when we believe, as we do believe, that this touch is substantial, and that the substance of God touches the substance of the soul. Many saints have experienced it in this life. The sweetness of delight which this touch occasions baffles all description. Neither will I speak of it, lest men should suppose that it is nothing beyond what my words imply,

for there are no terms by which we can designate or explain the deep things of God transacted in perfect souls. The language that befits these things is this: Let him who has been favoured with them judge of them by himself, feel them and enjoy them, and be silent about them."[1]

It is by means of these substantial touches that union or the Spiritual Marriage of the soul with the Son of God is consummated and maintained.[2]

In the twentieth chapter of her *Life*, St. Teresa gives several striking descriptions of ecstasy. In these will be found not only the details already given, but others also. Let us now merely quote a few lines from the *Second Relation* to Father Alvarez:

"Rapture and suspension in my opinion come to the same thing. But I generally use the word 'suspension' to avoid employing the word 'rapture,' which is startling. Suspension may also really be termed union, and of this I have just been speaking. Rapture only differs from it in this: it lasts longer, and it is more felt from without. By degrees it stops one's breathing; one cannot speak or open one's eyes. It is true that union produces this effect; but rapture produces it much more powerfully, one's natural warmth evaporating one knows not where; when the rapture is profound, for these states of prayer admit of degrees, the hands are as it were frozen, and are sometimes as rigid as bits of wood; the body stands upright or

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[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza II, line iv. L. T. II, p. 243.

[2] *The Obscure Night*, Book II, chapters xxxiii and xxxiv.

kneeling, according to the position it is in at the moment in which the rapture seizes upon it. . . . God wills, as it seems to me, that the soul should be more deeply conscious of what it is enjoying than when in the state of union; and this is why He usually reveals to it some of His grandeurs during the state of rapture."

I have already remarked that the physiological phenomena of ecstasy possessed for the most part nothing miraculous, and that ecstasy is not commonly a fact of angelical character. This I will now briefly show.

The Abbé Saudreau who, as I have already pointed out, was originally of the contrary opinion, nevertheless acknowledged that this is the view of St. Thomas and of Suarez.[1]— In every theology, one always finds ecstasy placed among the effects of love: divine love is ecstatic. This traditional formula can be traced back to the time of St. Denys at any rate. St. Francis of Sales also makes use of it.[2]—St. Teresa tells us that union appears in order to disappear, and that suspension diminishes in order to be renewed; that the "will suspends the powers," and hosts of other

[1] *Vie d'union*, §§ 218, 371.

[2] It is to be noted that from end to end of his book St. Francis of Sales explains the greatest of mystical graces, union and ecstasy, by a feeling of love, by some admirable truth in the soul, and all this assumes nothing of a miraculous character.

details which appear to have nothing miraculous about them.

St. John of the Cross, I think, has cleared up the question finally. First of all, let us make plain a very important matter of terminology bearing upon the subject. The saint divides the operations of the soul into those that are discursive, and those that are spiritual. The former constitutes the way of the senses, the latter, that of the spirit. For instance, we read: "for the soul cannot act at all, nor receive impressions, nor persevere in the work it has before it, but by the action *of its intellectual* and *spiritual faculties*. It is through the *intellectual* faculties that the soul reflects, searches out, and effects the knowledge of things; and through the *spiritual* faculties that it rejoices in the knowledge thus attained without further labour, search, or reflection."[1] "For God begins now to communicate Himself no longer through the *channel of sense*, as He did formerly, in consecutive reflections, by which we arranged and divided our knowledge, but in *pure spirit*, which admits not of successive ideas, and in an act of pure contemplation, to which neither the

[1] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, ch. xiv. L. T. I, p. 107.

interior nor the exterior senses of our lower nature can ascend."[1] This shows that, according to St. John of the Cross, *spiritual* is simply synonymous with *intuitive*, it is the *simplex intuitus* of St. Thomas.[2] Others appear to think that *spiritual* means *angelical*. But, nothing of the kind. The intuitive communications of the state of ecstasy may be partly sensible, *i.e.*, perceptible. St. John of the Cross himself teaches this:

"Since the sensitive part of the soul is weak, without any capacity for the strong things of the spirit, they who are in the state of proficients are liable, by reason of the spiritual communications which reach to the sensitive part, to great infirmities and sufferings, and physical derangements, and *consequently weariness of mind*, as it is written: 'the corruptible body . . . presseth down the mind.' Hence the communications made to these cannot be very strong, intense, or *spiritual*, such as they are required to be for the divine union with God, because of the weakness and corruption of the sensitive part which has a share in them. *Here is the source* of ecstasies, raptures, and dislocation of the bones *which always happen whenever these communications are not purely spiritual*, that is, granted to the mind alone, as in the case of the perfect, already purified in the second night of the spirit. In them these raptures and physical sufferings have no place, for they enjoy liberty of spirit with unclouded and unsuspended senses."[3]

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[1] *The Obscure Night*, Book I, ch. ix. L. T. I, p. 352.

[2] *Summa*, $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 180, a. 3.

[3] *The Obscure Night*, Book II, ch. i. L. T. I, pp. 374, 375.

Hence it is plain that the physiological phenomena of ecstasy are no miracle wrought by God in favour of union; they are the natural consequence of our weakness and an impediment which should disappear later on. If any doubt remain on the subject, one has only to recall the strange fact put on record by St. John of the Cross as follows:

". . . The mind is moved to delight itself in God—that is the higher part of our nature; and sensuality, which is the lower part, is moved towards sensible gratification, because it knows, and admits of, none other. And so it happens that the soul, while in spirit it is praying, is in the senses troubled, to its great disgust, with the rebellious movements of the flesh passively. . . . But when the sensitive is already cleansed in the purgation of the Obscure Night, it is no more subject to these infirmities. . . ."[1]

Who will maintain that these infirmities are a miraculous phenomenon due to some special interposition of God? But if they are natural, why should not other analogous facts be so also?

iii. *Contemplation in the state of spiritual marriage.*—I am dealing with contemplation and its phases, and not with the degrees of the spiritual life. This is why I shall not attempt to define what is meant by the spiritual

[1] *The Obscure Night*, Book I, ch. iv. L. T. I, p. 336.

espousals and spiritual marriage. Moreover these pictorial expressions are not always used in the same sense by mystical writers. St. Francis of Sales does not treat of them in any special manner in his *Treatise of the Love of God*. St. Teresa affirms, in *The Interior Castle*, that the prayer of union does not rise to the point of the spiritual espousals ;[1] hence, according to her, these correspond to the state of ecstasy. St. John of the Cross says that ecstasies are forerunners of the espousals ; and this amounts to much the same thing. The spiritual marriage according to both writers comes afterwards. Between these two states there is also entire continuity. "I might have put these last two Mansions together," says St. Teresa, "because there is no closed door between the two."[2]

Spiritual marriage is the name most favoured by the mystics for the union that transforms. My aim is to give a few of the characteristics of this state of contemplation, but without asserting that there are no others, for here it is more difficult to understand the wonderful operations of the Holy Ghost than anywhere else.

[1] Fifth Mansion, ch. iv.
[2] Sixth Mansion, ch. iv.

It is often said that this state is quite a new one ; everything in it is altered. These expressions may be taken in a right sense and in a wrong one. Apart from miraculous and infinitely varied graces which God may impart to certain souls—graces which are moreover accidental, and with which we have nothing to do—contemplation remains fundamentally one and the same. "For the flame which afterwards unites itself to the soul in the glory of love is the very same which before enveloped and purified it ; just as the fire which ultimately penetrates the substance of the fuel is the very same which in the beginning darted its flames around it, playing about it, and depriving it of its coldness until it prepared it with its heat for its own entrance into it, and transformation of it into itself."[1]

In the *Obscure Night*, St. John of the Cross devotes an entire chapter, the tenth of the second Book, to the drawing out of this comparison of contemplation with fire, a fire which is always the same, but which produces different effects upon the wood according to whether the latter is more or less prepared for its action.

[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza I, line iv. L. T. II., p. 227.

Hence, contemplation is not essentially changed. Yet in man all is changed. All is changed so far as his body is concerned: love has worked its way with difficulty in man who is but little accustomed to the supernatural life; it has only succeeded in moulding our nature, disorganized through concupiscence, at the cost of great struggles and sufferings and of all the sensible infirmities of the ecstatic period; but at last it has won the victory. The very body is, as one might say, *converted:*

"One effect of rapture," says St. Teresa, "is a strange sort of detachment which I cannot explain. All I can say is, that it differs in a manner from all other kinds of detachment, and that it is even far superior to those wrought by graces that only affect the soul. In the latter case, however perfect the detachment may be, it is only a *spiritual detachment;* but here, God appears to will *the very body to attain in fact to this sort of absolute detachment.* Thus one becomes more separated than ever from the things of this world, and one finds life incomparably more full of trouble." [1]

The transformation wrought by love is the outcome of this perfect conversion. There is apparently a return to a state of innocence; the very passions are sanctified:

"As to the body, that is now ordered according to God in all its interior and exterior senses, all the acts of which are directed to God; the four passions of the soul are also

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[1] *Life*, ch. xx.

under control in Him; for the soul's rejoicing, hope, fear, and grief are conversant with God only; all its appetites, and all its anxieties also, have regard only unto Him. The whole substance of the soul is now so occupied with God, so intent upon Him, that its very first movements, even inadvertently, have God for their object and their end. The intellect, memory, and will tend directly to God; the affections, senses, desires, and longings, hope and joy, the whole substance of the soul, rise instantly towards God, though the soul is not making any conscious efforts in that direction. Such a soul as this doeth continually the work of God, is intent upon Him and His works, without thinking or reflecting on what it is doing for Him. The constant and habitual practice of this has suppressed all conscious reflection, and even those acts of fervour also which were present to it in the beginning of its conversion."[1]

The soul goes straight to God, without the surprises and infirmities of the past: and therefore St. John of the Cross affirms that ecstasy is wanting in the spiritual marriage. And St. Teresa observes the same thing:

"What surprises me is that, when the soul has reached this state, it has scarcely any more of the impetuous raptures of which I have spoken: even ecstasies and soarings of the spirit become very rare. Formerly, the least occasion, a pious hymn, the first words of a sermon, a devotional picture, were enough to carry it out of itself. . . . Our Lord has no sooner received it within these mansions and shown it all their beauties than it loses the great infirmity which was such a continual and painful affliction to it."[2]

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[1] *A Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza XXVIII. L. T. II, p. 152.

[2] *The Interior Castle*, Seventh Mansion, ch. iii.

From this it follows that union with God may become permanent without impediment. It would be impossible to live with one's interior and external senses constantly suspended; but when union with God is able to take place without hindering the exercise of these faculties, it becomes almost constant. And hence it has been called *permanent* union. This is far from saying that it cannot be lost. St. John of the Cross thinks one is confirmed in graces owing to the reciprocal fidelity between the soul and God;[1] but it must not be said that one is quite incapable of committing mortal sin, for this would be to run counter to the Council of Trent.[2] St. Teresa, too, very plainly asserts the possibility of falling and being lost.[3] Permanent union means a *union from one moment to another*, the soul and God scarcely losing sight of one another, at any rate whenever the soul can direct its attention to God. It then experiences a sort of duality, that of two lives, one the ordinary life of the senses which still goes on, and the other a life with God, which is more real and strong than the former.

This life consists in a luminous kind of love

[1] *A Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza XXII.
[2] *Sess. VI*, cap. ix and xiii.
[3] *The Interior Castle*, Seventh Mansion, ch. ii.

which is almost unbroken. It is the best of the known elements of union and ecstasy, without the paralysis of the senses :

"These sweet and penetrating touches of His love, my sisters, I doubt not but that you have felt ; for when one reaches the prayer of union, it pleases our Lord to grant this grace, provided one is faithful to keep His commandments. When you experience these aspirations of love, remember that they come from the last mansion wherein God abides within us."[1]—" All I can say about it or understand about it is, that the soul, or rather its spirit, becomes one with God."[2]

She might have said the same of ecstasy. But " after the spiritual espousals more than one separation occurs. And thus is it after union, for although union consists in uniting two things into one, yet as a matter of fact the two things may be disunited and each go off by itself : and thus is it that the favour of union ordinarily passes away quickly, leaving the soul deprived of its sweet company, or at any rate of its sense thereof. In spiritual marriage, on the contrary, the soul abides always with God at the centre of which I have spoken."[3]

Hence the soul always keeps the sense of the presence of God, and also of His inward

[1] *The Interior Castle*, Seventh Mansion, ch. iii.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. ii. [3] *Ibid.*, ch. ii.

action. Some appear to think that the soul directly beholds sanctifying grace within it. Not without some special grace: it would be a greater miracle than that of seeing the soul itself. But in the way in which we have so often explained, it has within it the sense and the assurance of divine action:

"Subsequently the soul understands still better *by the effects* that it lives henceforth only in its heavenly Bridegroom. It sees clearly from certain aspirations of love, which are secret but very keen, that it receives its life from God, and it cannot have the slightest doubt on the subject. . . . Just as a person suddenly plunged in the water could not help feeling wet, so, and still more certainly, the soul feels and recognizes the divine operations. A waterfall cannot be explained without a spring, nor can the soul explain what takes place inwardly without God; it perceives clearly that God within it is piercing it with the arrows with which it is wounded, that He is life, and that He is the sun the light of which, arising from within, is shed upon all its powers."[1]

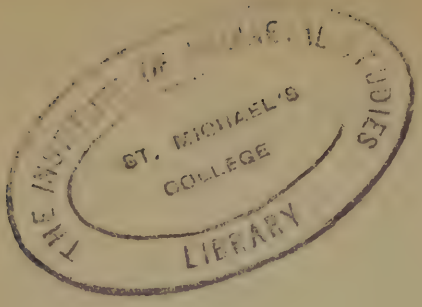
Truly an admirable state, and one which is right worthy of our spiritual coveting! "The movements of the flame, that is its vibrations and its flickerings, are not the work of the soul only, transformed in the fire of the Holy Ghost, nor of the Holy Ghost only, but of the soul and of the Holy Ghost together, who moves the soul as the fire moves the air that

[1] *The Interior Castle*, Seventh Mansion, ch. ii.

is burning. Thus then these motions of God and of the soul together are as it were the acts of God by which He renders the soul glorious."[1]

And, in this sublime state, the soul has but to grow ever more and more perfect, until the day of unclouded contemplation in heaven.

[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza III, line ii. L. T. II, p. 258.



APPENDIX

(See p. 89)

The difficulty of dividing contemplation into active and passive contemplation in any intelligible way comes out from an examination of the principal attempts to explain the distinction between the two kinds.

1.—Father Scaramelli's manual was for a long time the one most in vogue: it may be taken as typical. In the fourth chapter of the second treatise of his *Spiritual Directory*, Father Scaramelli's *general* definition of *contemplation* (in his seventh chapter, he remarks that active and passive contemplation in fact make only a single kind) is this: "a fixed regard, full of admiration and love." But, he adds that faith is not a sufficient cause of it, for faith "is not sufficiently illuminating for contemplation," it is illumined by the rays of heavenly wisdom. How can we tell this? Clearly, because we feel the influence of this gift, otherwise it would be mere gratuitous assertion. Further, the

author says specially of acquired contemplation (ch. vii, § 69), "this is a *special* illumination at last granted by God, whereby one is settled," and that it is a gift "due neither to any diligence nor endeavour." If this is the case, we reply, it is quite impossible to set up any specific difference between it and infused contemplation: both are a loving regard; both demand a special grace which is not due to any efforts of our own. They are one and the same thing. How, then, can it be said that they belong to two different orders, since they are one in "kind" and come to the same thing? This contradiction comes out somewhat naïvely in the following sentence quoted approvingly by Father Poulain (ch. iv, § 6): acquired contemplation "is *that which can be acquired by our own endeavours* with the help of grace, and by long-continued practice of meditation, although *strictly speaking it is not due to all these efforts.*" Thus, strictly speaking, it is *gratis data*, but in fact, *it is obtained by one's own efforts!*—Father Scaramelli tries to establish another difference, though of quite a secondary kind: that acquired contemplation comes in consequence of our efforts to recollect ourselves, but mystical contemplation without these and as it were by surprise. How arbi-

trary and inaccurate is this! The greatest contemplatives are distracted by business affairs, and often need to practise recollection to enter into mystical contemplation. St. Teresa notes the difference between the different degrees of mystical prayer according to the greater or less amount of care they demand; at the beginning, she says, the prayer of union hardly arises except at the end of long-continued prayer of quiet.

The main mistake of Father Scaramelli's book is that it makes the graces of mystical contemplation graces *gratis datæ*, and maintains the impossible distinction above refuted; we may also complain that he multiplies the degrees of contemplation to infinity. Nevertheless, he has rendered good service.

2.—Father Scaramelli's acquired contemplation is what we call "the prayer of simplicity," *says Father Poulain.* Yet this is not altogether the fact. For this writer himself seems to be aware that he has carried the exposition of it further forward, since he writes: "I consider this chapter (the one in which he deals with the subject) as being as useful in itself as the really mystical part of which I am about to speak" (ch. ii, towards the end).

This prayer of simplicity is, then, not mys-

tical, according to Father Poulain; it is acquired contemplation under another name. Well, I shall show that he gives it all the characteristics given by the masters, and by himself too, to mystical contemplation. There is no doubt but that the contemplation spoken of by the great saints I have quoted is mystical contemplation; Father Poulain himself acknowledges that, according to St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa, the word "contemplation" is only applied to a mystical state which is either latent or manifest (ch. iv, § 4). But there is nothing in mystical contemplation which is not to be found in the prayer of simplicity. When it becomes simple, says this writer, "it is called *a state of prayer which is a loving attention to God.*" These are the very expressions used by St. John of the Cross and St. Francis of Sales to define contemplation. But is it passive like contemplation? Yes. It does away with spontaneous acts and reflections: "When this state has attained to its full development, not only are certain acts of which I have just spoken few and far between, but one feels a sort of impotence and distaste for producing them" (ch. ii, § 3). This is the "binding" which to St. John of the Cross and to St. Teresa seems such a clear sign of the special

intervention of God. Father Poulain says also explicitly elsewhere: "In order to apply the above rules, more detailed directions will be given in the fourteenth chapter as to this binding. It is true that they are laid down for the case of the prayer of quiet, but this is analogous, though more marked" (ch. ii, § 62). This impotence arises, to quote this writer again, from the special operation of God (from mystical grace, as St. John of the Cross would say): "Here, as will presently be shown, is an unequivocal sign that the gaze of simplicity is the result of divine action" (ch. ii, § 46). Care must be taken not to impede such action: "Such souls must be well enough advised not to resist grace, *if God is pleased to operate.*"

How does this kind of prayer fall short of a state of mystical contemplation? What more do the masters demand? Is not this just what Father Poulain himself finds in the state of quiet? However, we must not forget that this writer further sees in mystical contemplation a kind of vision of God, or if another expression is preferred, an "ineffable" perception of God (ch. vi, § 14). And it is for the reception of this that he demands spiritual senses. This is easily understood, apparently, on condition of passing through "a little tunnel at

the outset" (§ 21). In the first part of my second chapter, I have shown that this element is non-existent. This writer almost owns that it has been overlooked during sixteen centuries: "It matters little that St. Denys the Mystic and other early writers rather allow one to guess at this thesis than put it forward definitely. It is enough for us that St. Teresa, followed by so many others, gives it explicitly" (ch. v, § 5). The reader only has to refer to the quotations I have given to see that St. Teresa categorically rejects it, and so do such primitive authors as St. Gregory, St. Bernard, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and others. Lastly, Father Poulain himself maintains a proposition to show that this essential element appears but very dimly in the state of quiet, which nobody disputes, as he rightly adds (§ 27). And therefore, it must not be made use of as a practically distinctive characteristic (ch. xvi, § 10), and this is all the more the case since there are other salient characteristics (§ 14). As we have already seen, he made use of one of these other characteristics to *define* mystical union.

3.—As to Dom Lehodey, he does not seem to be quite persuaded of the existence of the prayer of simplicity. Still, he admits it,

since a choice has to be made between the ancients and a great many moderns, but without paying attention to the special element pointed out by Father Poulain (*Voies de l'Oraison mentale*, Part II, ch. ix). If his exposition of it is closely studied, it will be seen that he runs upon the usual and inevitable reef: when he wants to contrast it with affective prayer, he gives it all the marks of mystical contemplation; when he contrasts it with the state of quiet, he brings it back to affective prayer.—But for this misunderstanding and its consequences, it is impossible to praise his work too highly; indeed, we may say that his manual from a practical point of view is nearer perfection than any other.

4.—Now we are on the subject, may we go on to speak of an *a priori* proof sometimes put forward on behalf of acquired contemplation? It is argued, that, as there is a kind of natural contemplation, so, since grace imitates nature, must there be a kind of supernatural contemplation (Father Poulain, ch. ii, § 14). But is there any parity between the contemplation of a mother in the presence of her child and that of the poor heart of man in the presence of his God, who is so great and so abstract? What can we achieve without special grace, with infused

virtues alone? *The whole question lies in this.* But the doctrine which is universally received in the Catholic Church is, that acts of special difficulty call for an exercise of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. For this reason, all tradition ascribes contemplation, which is so high and sublime, to the gifts of the Holy Ghost. And this is why it is called passive and infused.

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